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ABSTRACT

A review of the seminar proceedings on "The Realities of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child", held in Melbourne, Australia in May, 1978 is presented in this paper. The report contains the opening address and speeches on the following topics: (1) the rights of the child--myth or reality; (2) present social and judicial developments and practical problems pertaining to the principles presented in the 1959 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child; (3) a reaction against child rights; (4) issues and policies concerning who's responsible for the rights of children in a changing society; (5) relationships between childhood socialization and the role of parents and the role of society; (6) major problems and differences affecting children's growth and development in both Third World and Western urbanized industrial countries; (7) rights, needs and demands of the individual child, the child's family and the state; (8) public policies for children; (9) children's rights and cultural diversity; (10) world hunger and the child; and (11) language development in children. Also included: a list of questions posed as guidelines for group discussion; the introduction to the plenary session of the seminar; a summary report of the seminar, and a bibliography of the rights of the child and the family. (Author/SE)

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OMEP

ORGANISATION MONDIALE POUR L'EDUCATION PRESCOLAIRE
WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL PARA LA EDUCATION PRESCOLAR

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEMINAR ON

THE REALITIES OF THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

HELD AT THE
STATE COLLEGE OF VICTORIA - INSTITUTE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT, 4 MADDEN GROVE, KEW, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA
24TH. TO 26TH. MAY 1978

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF O.M.E.P.
22ND. & 23RD. MAY, 1978
ST.HILDA'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF O.M.E.P.
AUSTRALIAN PRE-SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (INC)

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ABOUT OMEP

Organization Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire (O.M.E.P.) is a world wide organization dedicated to the full development and well-being of children. The main tasks of O.M.E.P. are to promote a greater understanding of children under eight years of age, and to share between different countries the experience and knowledge gained through the study of young children in their formative years.

O.M.E.P. is an international non-governmental organization which co-operates with UNESCO on projects of mutual concern, and other international organizations having similar aims.

Membership is open to organizations and persons of any race, creed, nationality or political opinion. At the present time, 48 countries are members of O.M.E.P. or are preparing to be members; the number has grown in each of the 28 years of its existence. Eighteen countries from five continents including Australia sent representatives to the first conference in 1948, held in Prague. The World Assembly is the governing body, meeting at three-year intervals in various countries. The executive body is the World Council which meets every year.

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FOREWORD

by Lady Thomson, O.B.E.,
National President, Australian Pre-School Association (Inc.)

The Australian Pre-School Association (The Australian National Committee of O.M.E.P.) extends a warm welcome to the World President and Council members of the international organization. This is the first occasion on which the Australian Committee has been able to issue an invitation to the world organization, although Australia has been represented at every meeting held since O.M.E.P. was founded. We are honoured and delighted to provide the venue for the World Council Meeting and Seminar.

The Seminar theme, 'The Realities of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child', based on the United Nation's Declaration of that title, will permit discussion of the practical issues related to the Declaration. The United Nations has designated 1979 as 'The International Year of the Child' and this Seminar hopefully will provide a stimulus and inspiration to all participants concerned with the activities of that important year.

The Chairman, Mrs. Ellie V. Pullin, M.B.E., and members of the O.M.E.P. Committee who have planned and organized the meetings and Seminar, have worked unsparingly since the invitation was issued, and are deserving of the greatest praise and thanks.

I wish all who attend this Seminar an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

OMEP COMMITTEE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The O.M.E.P. Committee and the Executive of A.P.A. wish to acknowledge the support from Federal and State Governments, the Staff and Council of the I.E.C.D. and the generous contributions of speakers and discussion leaders from a number of professions.

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24 -

9.00 am EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN AND AROUND MELBOURNE

Co-ordinator: Jean Adamson, M.A.(Stanford), Dip.K.T.C.(Melb.), M.A.C.E., Director, Lady Gowrie Centre, Melbourne.

A variety of day and half-day optional visits to centres and programmes involved in early childhood education, development and care in Melbourne.

8.00 pm OFFICIAL OPENING

Chairman: Lady Thomson, O.B.E., National President, Australian Pre-School Association (Inc.)

Opening Address: Her Excellency Lady Cowen, C.St.J.

Speaker: Margaret Devine, B.S., M.A., Ed.D., World President of O.M.E.P.

THURSDAY, MAY 25 -

9.00 am KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Chairman: Florence Kendall, B.Sc., N.S.Dip., Dip.K.T.C., F.A.C.E. Vice-Principal, I.E.C.D.

Speaker: Candide Pineault, B.A.(Montreal), M.A., Ph.D. (Cornell), Director of Pre-school Curriculum Division, Ministry of Education, Quebec City, Canada.

Topic: The Realities of the United Nation's Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

9.45 am Reaction Speaker: Rosemary Milne, B.A., B.Ed.(Melb.), Dip.K.T.C.(Melb.), M.A.C.E., Head of Division of Early Childhood Education, Care and Development, I.E.C.D.

11.15 am DISCUSSION GROUPS

Group Organiser: Beth Stubbs, B.Sc.(Columb.), B.Ed.(Mon.), N.S.Dip., Dip.K.T.C.(Melb.), M.A.C.E., Director, Division of Pre-School Child Development, Department of Health, Victoria.

THURSDAY, MAY 25 (CONT.) -

2.00 pm FORUM SESSION

Chairman: Brian Jacka, TPTC, B.Comm., M.Ed. (Melb.), M.A.C.E., Co-ordinator of Undergraduate Studies, I.E.C.D.

Speakers: Terry Carney, LLB(Hons.), Dip.Crim. (Melb.), Lecturer in Law, Monash University.

Lorraine Riach, B.Comm.(Melb.), M.A.(LaTrobe), TSTC (Melb.), Lecturer in Sociology, I.E.C.D.

Winston Rickards, M.D., F.R.A.N.Z.C.P., Department of Psychiatry, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Howard Williams, M.D., F.R.A.C.P., Department of Paediatrics, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Topic: Children and Their Rights in a Changing Society.

7.00 pm for 7.30 pm SEMINAR DINNER

Chairman: Ellie V. Pullin, M.B.E., Convener of O.M.E.P. Committee of the Australian Pre-School Association. Vice-President Pacific-Far East Region of O.M.E.P.

FRIDAY, MAY 26 -

9.00 am COMMISSIONS

Discussion Co-ordinator: Desmond Connelly, B.A.(Lond.), B.Ed.(Melb.), Dip.Ed.Admin.(U.N.E.), Ph.D. (Ottawa), Principal, I.E.C.D.

Group Organiser: Beth Stubbs.

11.30 am A. PLENARY SESSION REPORT PREPARATION

Commission leaders prepare proposals for the Plenary Session with Desmond Connelly.

B. PARALLEL PAPERS AND FILM SESSIONS

1. Speaker: Mable Anderson, B.S.(Alab.), M.A. (Mich.State), Ed.D.(Penn.), Co-ordinator of Early Childhood Education, Birmingham Board of Education, Alabama, U.S.A.

   Topic: Public Policies and the Rights of the Child.

2. Speaker: Leslie Claydon, M.A.(Bristol), M.E.(Lond.), Senior Lecturer in Education, LaTrobe University.

   Topic: Children's Rights and Cultural Diversity.

FRIDAY, MAY 26 (CONT.) -

3. Speaker: Adrian Harris, National Director, Community Aid Abroad.
   Topic: Hunger and the Rights of Children.
4. Speaker: Gillian Parmenter, B.Sc.(Hons.) (Nott.), Ph.D.(Melb.), Lecturer in Psychology, I.E.C.D.
   Topic: Language Development in Children.
5. Discussion Leader: Frank Bishop, M.D.,B.S., F.R.C.S.R.N.A.N.Z.C.P., Department of Psychiatry, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.
   Film: Do I Have to Kill my Child.
6. Discussion Leaders: Peggy Banff, Dip.K.T.C., B.S.Educ., Director, Community Early Children's Services, Creche and Kindergarten Association, Queensland.

   Beryl Edmonds, K.T.C.(Melb.), Dip.Adv.St.(Melb.), Montessori Cert., M.A.C.E., Director of a double unit kindergarten, Corio, Victoria.

   Film: Not to Lose You My Language

   Also a display of aboriginal materials.

2.00 pm PLENARY SESSION

Location: Mooroolbeek Hall

Chairman: Evangeline Ward, Ed.D., Professor, Early Childhood Education, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Report Presentation: Desmond Connelly

4.00 pm VOTES OF THANKS Lady Thomson, O.B.E.
Margaret Devine, World President of O.M.E.P.

RESOLUTIONS

FORMALLY APPROVED AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE SEMINAR:

1 ALL PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT DAY OF A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND A COMPLEMENTARY DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD.

THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD SHOULD BE A STATEMENT OF INTENT FROM WHICH NATIONS SHOULD DRAW UP THEIR OWN BILL OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN WHICH SHOULD BE ENACTED INTO THE LAWS OF THE LAND.

2 THE CHILD SHALL BE INVOLVED IN CHOICES WHICH AFFECT HIS FUTURE AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW UP IN THE CARE AND UNDER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HIS PARENT OR PARENTS OR IN A FAMILY GROUP APPROPRIATE TO THE CULTURAL CONTEXT. AT ALL LEVELS THERE SHOULD BE RECOGNITION OF CHANGING CONCEPTS, MODELS AND STYLES OF THE FAMILY AND FAMILY LIFE CYCLES.

3 THE INTEGRATION OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, WELFARE AND OTHER SERVICES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED SO AS TO PROVIDE RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, RESEARCH, ADVICE, AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND FOR THOSE WORKING WITH THEM.

TO ACHIEVE THIS INTEGRATION EFFECTIVE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION MUST BE ESTABLISHED AMONG ALL OF THOSE PROVIDING, DEVELOPING AND USING THESE SERVICES.

4 THE EXPRESSED NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE A PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES. POWERS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO ENABLE PEOPLES TO BE ACTIVE IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS. RESOURCES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL SHOULD INCLUDE THOSE NEEDED TO PROVIDE PREPARATION FOR PARENTHOOD AS WELL AS SUPPORT OF APPROPRIATE KINDS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE OR WHO SHARE IN A CHILD-REARING ROLE.

5 THERE SHOULD BE A GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE NATIONAL ROLE OF O.M.E.P. AND PARTICULARLY IN THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD. O.M.E.P. SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON SPECIFIC LOCAL ACTION INVOLVING THE ASSOCIATION OF A VARIETY OF HELPING SERVICES.

ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY LADY COWEN, C.St.J., ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE SEMINAR

I am very pleased to have been asked to open this O.M.E.P. Conference, which has as its theme, 'The Rights of the Child'.

I think that I have always been sympathetic to the ideas of your organization. About the time that O.M.E.P. was founded in 1948, I was a recently married young woman. I had no children of my own then, but I was beginning to become interested in ideas on child raising which were being talked about. An American friend had put into my hands a copy of the first edition of Dr. Spock's famous "Baby and Child Care" and I found it absorbing reading. I had not previously thought much about child raising. All I knew was the prevailing practice at the time of my own childhood. It seemed to me that emphasis at that time was on training children to become conforming members of adult society. It took a long time, overall, for children to learn the patterns, and some were amenable and co-operative while others were difficult or downright refractory. The important thing was to get them into shape, with as little difficulty as possible.

Dr. Spock's book presented an entirely new view of the child to me. The child, it seemed, was not so much clay to be moulded, but a person, albeit an immature person, with special feelings, perceptions and needs of his or her own which were distinctive to the developing child. I must say that this approach struck a very responsive chord in me. A few years later, when I became a mother, this view was to set me on a collision course with most members of the older generation and many of my own contemporaries. There were, however, a few people of both groups who were sympathetic to these ideas, and who did not view with disapproval demand feeding, a relaxed approach to toilet training, acceptance of sibling rivalry, and so on. I was grateful for their support because this new understanding of children and child development felt right to me.

I took great pleasure in the pre-school education my children received because it was such a happy and constructive experience for them. Being widely spaced in age, they had no playmates at home in their early years, and they relished the social experience. Since the pre-school was part of a progressive primary school which encouraged parent interest in education and child development, I became interested in the theory and the practice. This school, I should like to mention, because it is not far from the place in whch we are meeting tonight, was Preshil, and it has long been a pioneer in progressive education in Australia. And while I am naming names, may I say that a friend of my mother's who was always interested in what my children were doing, was Mrs. Sylvia Goodman, who has been active in the pre-school movement for as long as I can remember.

These views on child development had evolved gradually. They had been a long time in the coming, and were the product of study, speculation and observation by many scholars in a number of countries over many decades. By mid-century they had produced a mainstream of thinking which found acceptance with thoughtful educators and parents. In 1978 this approach commands wide acceptance, and it is no longer a debating point that children need to be loved, that they develop at different rates, that they should be allowed to explore their environment, to play with messy materials, to verbalize negative feelings, and so on. I suspect that your OMEP Conferences in early days would have been concerned with these issues among others. In 1978 other topics are claiming your attention, and after about 30 years it is a reflection of progress that the old ideas have gained acceptance. It is also a reflection of social change and your response to it, that you are now concerned with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and such issues as the needs of the child of the Single Parent, the role of fathers (who in some cases are the single parent), the provision of day care for children of working parents, the needs of handicapped and isolated children, and the needs of migrant children. You are also now concerned with cases in which there may be conflict between the rights of the parent and of the child, and you are concerned that the best interests of the child should be paramount, even though these may not be easily discernible. You might also be considering whether the State has some interest in offering support to families so that a parent can afford to stay at home and look after young children. The concept of a Declaration of the Rights of the Child is a new departure from previous practice. It used to be assumed that parents knew by instinct and tradition what was best for their children, and would naturally do what was best for those children. The implication of the Declaration is that parents may know what children need, but be unable because of conditions beyond their control, to provide it, or that parents do not know what experts consider essential to the physical and mental health of their children and thus knowingly or unknowingly deprive them of essentials.

It is a wonderful idea to assert the rights of children to love, understanding and affection, and education, to protection from exposure to harmful experiences and discrimination. It may prove difficult to legislate for such provisions, and even more difficult to enforce the provisions. Perhaps the greatest value for the time being that comes from such a Declaration of Rights will be the attention that it focuses on what the consensus of enlightened opinion sees as the real needs of the child. This will stimulate concern in areas which have received inadequate consideration, and create public awareness through discussion and debate. Our societies in general have become increasingly "welfare-minded" and given our increased understanding of the physical and psychological needs of children, it is logical that we should become increasingly concerned that our children - our future - have the best that we can give them.

As we are gathered here in an affluent society, considering the Rights of Children, most of us will feel some guilt and helplessness with regard to the millions of children in developing countries for whom the attainment of such rights is so difficult. So many of these children are undernourished that their grip on life itself is precarious. While there may seem little we can do to help them, I believe we should do whatever we can, and I am pleased to read that OMEP has fostered projects in developing countries. I hope that it will continue to do everything it can in this way. At the same time we should not let our feelings of helplessness elsewhere deter us from continuing to press for what is best for our children in our communities. We still have great areas of unsatisfied needs, new needs emerging in new situations, and much to do.

I am pleased to declare the Conference open, and hope that its deliberations will be fruitful.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - MYTH OR REALITY

- Margaret M. Devine

Having travelled half way around the world to be with you this evening, I thought I should at least be prepared to deliver a few remarks about children that you may never have heard before.

And if that is what you expected, I'm afraid I shall have to disappoint you. The sad fact is that the human condition of the world's children - and I'm speaking now in the most general terms - has remained unchanged over many generations.

All of which has turned the poet into a sage who once wrote that "the child of yesterday is the heir of tomorrow". For today's children have seemingly inherited yesterday's afflictions, yesterday's illnesses and abuses, the poverty, the hunger, the stresses and the whole catalogue of human misery and suffering that for so long have plagued the conscience of mankind.

If we wish to be charitable, we can of course point to a piece of evidence here and there which we may rightly call progress. But while improvements do occur, they are isolated. And what is worse, they are far overshadowed by new forms of cruelty that are being visited on children by modern-day grown-ups.

It's a horrifying mosaic that contains the seeds of disasters yet to come. I refer to man's pollution of our air with nuclear fall-out. I have in mind the poisoning of our oceans and streams with deadly chemicals and oil spills. I'm thinking of pesticides that kill not only insects but live-stock and infest human beings, including children and the unborn, with crippling and death-dealing diseases such as cancer of the tissues, the blood and the marrow.

And so we need to remind ourselves in the most forceful way possible that children too make up part of our ecology. And our environment. And that children too are not only a precious resource but an irreplaceable one as well.

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The picture I've drawn for you is a grim one, indeed. Yet, a true one.

But, having come to you half way around the world, it somewhat behooves me to give you another side of the picture, a more hopeful side that may redeem our belief in man's humanity to man .. or, should I also say woman's humanity to woman? ... and people's humanity to children?

The more hopeful side began to take shape about twenty years ago when some seventy countries, which then made up the General Assembly of the United Nations, drew up what has been proclaimed as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

Let me review very briefly what these rights are about, for even we, sophisticated and knowledgeable as we are, need ever to remind ourselves that there are wrongs that affect the children of our world, and there are now rights that not only belong to them but are meant to eliminate the wrongs.

There is, first, the right to affection, love and understanding.

The right to adequate nutrition and medical care ... to free education ... to full opportunity for play and recreation ... the right to a name and nationality ... to special care, if handicapped ... the right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster ... to learn to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities ... the right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood ... and, finally, to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin.

It was this Declaration of the Rights of the Child, drawn up in 1959, that inspired such organizations as UNICEF along with voluntary agencies in different countries to consult on further ways to help nations protect children's rights.

And now, nearly twenty years later, it has inspired us - the World Council of OMEP - to devote its two-day seminar to take a closer look at the Declaration. Indeed, such an examination is summed up in the theme of our meetings here in Melbourne! The UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child - Myth or Reality?

As we approach this task, we are all aware that universal recognition of these rights is essential, even though these same rights are not nearly available to most of the children in this world. And these rights will remain myths unless ancient, deep-rooted social problems and injustices are overcome.

If the child of yesterday is indeed the heir of tomorrow, let us at least make certain that the rights that belong to him will be a part of that legacy.

That means helping today to improve the poor living conditions of one and one-half billion children in the developing countries.

It means an overall attack on the problems of children, such as malnutrition, disease or lack of education - and a recognition that these problems are inextricably linked with the root problems of poverty and under-development.

It means that efforts must be directed to improving conditions within the family, the community, the country as a whole.

I take it to be significant that both UNICEF and OMEP came into being in the same year of 1946 - only a few months apart - both dedicated to bettering the lives of children on all continents. The world was still in a turmoil after the war when UNICEF and OMEP took upon themselves that immense challenge, which, incidentally, hasn't abated in the ensuing years. If anything, that challenge has been magnified many times, as have the problems.

I keep hearing from our national committees of OMEP countries what some of these problems are. They write to me in our New York office about their successes as well. And it is these successes - many of which I have witnessed first-hand - that inspire me, and which I'm sure inspire you in your own experiences - to continue to take on the challenges that led to OMEP's creation some thirty years ago.

OMEP's history over the three decades is not merely a story about deprivation and poor health and lack of educational opportunity that pervade the Third and Fourth Worlds. It's a story about a world organization whose members have taken into their own hands the tools for remedying these conditions that affect so many of our young children.

I recall a visit I had made to a remote rural area in a Latin America country where something new and something eventful had just happened - a kindergarten. It happened in a community that had known only a single school for older children.

It was obviously a poor community, inhabited almost exclusively by destitute farmers who worked the land mostly by hand. And so here came something new into their lives - a kindergarten - equipped with toys, and blocks, and modelling clay, and finger paints, puzzles, crayons, pictures, records and easels.

These things were as new to the parents as to the children, and it was difficult to decide who were more excited on the opening day. The fathers left their plows far in the fields and arrived at the scene by horse, by burro or by foot to witness the event - more accurately to witness the expression on the children's faces.

And who was it that worked this miracle - the miracle of a new kindergarten? It was OMEP's National Committee in that country.

Shortly thereafter I made a visit to a women's prison in a South American country. The prisoners happened to be mothers of young children - some of them born in prison. The mothers had been sentenced to anywhere from three months to 10 years for crimes ranging from shop-lifting and prostitution to grand larceny and murder.

As a prison, it wasn't much different from the kind you might find in any country. What made this institution unique is that it housed a nursery school and kindergarten for the young children. What's more, the mothers were permitted to visit with their children - to feed them, to hold them and to play with them for a significant portion of the day.

To me, it was a thrilling sight, and the fact that the playthings, the furniture, the special foods for the children, teachers trained in modern educational methodology - the fact that all of this was going on in a correctional institution for women is, again, a tribute to the OMEP National Committee of that South American country.

A year or so ago, in a small village in Africa, I met 12-year-old Nduku. Her day begins at 5 am, dragging on to about 9 in the evening. Sometime after 7 am, she hikes to a small stream for water. The stream is over five miles from her shamba and the journey takes over an hour each way. She makes four such trips each day collecting water for her family. She returns from each trip carrying a heavy jug, to make sure that she and her family get water for their minimum needs.

Nduku told me that as she walks she worries. She has heard that the water she is carrying to her family may actually be killing some of them, particularly the young children. And she may be right. Water-related diseases are today among the leading destroyers of infants and children. Some 5 million infants, every single year, die from intestinal disease before their first birthday.

Here, in this African country, the country of 12-year-old Nduku, I'm pleased to report that OMEP's liaison representatives to UNICEF continue to support UNICEF's efforts to make safe water accessible to villages in the region. Over two billion human beings - more than half of them children - are without safe water. Many have little or no access to water at all.

Closer to home and to this country in which we are now assembled, the Australian National Committee has conducted a survey of OMEP member countries intended to tell us whether young children are mainly in their own homes, or where they are if not at home. It will also tell us where parents want their children to be.

I merely cite this in passing as another example of the kinds of enterprising and meaningful initiatives undertaken by our OMEP family in different parts of the world.

*****

I now take you back to my earlier reference to the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child that was proclaimed nearly twenty years ago. And I summarized these rights for you.

Now, another UN milestone is its recent proclamation of IYC - the International Year of the Child - to be observed in 1979 - twenty years since its Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

A whole generation has grown up since 1959, so that it's time to pause, to look back, to review the present and to see ahead - in short, to examine those rights of the child and to ask ourselves: are they still relevant after twenty years? Or, in the words of our seminar theme, are they myth or reality?

I can think of no greater challenge than to arrive at the answers to these questions, for the answers should tell us what to take back to the UN General Assembly now that its membership has grown from 70 countries that drew up the Declaration to 110 member countries today.

But, first let us ask ourselves: Why an IYC? Why an International Year of the Child?

Well, we all know that children have special needs - and that these needs are not being adequately met.

We know that children are our future, and that the quality of tomorrow's world - perhaps even its survival - will be determined by the well-being, safety and development of children today.

We know that children are wholly dependent upon adults, and that we owe them the best we have to give.

The IYC, then, is an opportunity to focus on children, to place them at the centre of world concern.

It being the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, IYC is a time to recall its principles and to redouble our efforts to put them into practice.

It's a time for governments, for organizations, and individuals to work together in concrete, constructive, practical programs for the benefit of children.

Now where does OMEP come into the picture?

I'm a member of the U.S. Commission of the International Year of the Child and have participated in its meetings. I have also been involved in the work of the IYC Secretariat of the United Nations. If I can summarize many hours of briefings and discussions on how OMEP and IYC can go together, let me try to do so in about one minute's time.

First of all, IYC is to be a world-wide effort, so that OMEP can fit in comfortably with its plans.

There will be no world conference on IYC and no world plan of action; the focus will be on increased assistance to children in each country - in other words, national rather than world action.

Each country will examine the nature of its own needs and decide what must be done to better its services for children. This may require changes in both policy and programs.

National efforts will need to be mounted to overcome entrenched attitudes, to generate actions which will result in long-term benefits to children.

Certainly, OMEP can respond to the challenges I've just outlined. Our National Committees can take the lead in making known the objectives of IYC. We can encourage our national affiliates to co-operate. We should be able to mobilize support for national and local action programs according to each country's conditions, needs and priorities.

OMEP must assert its role of advocacy in influencing governments, whether in the industrialized or developing world, on behalf of whatever is in the best interests of the young child.

All of what I've said can be summed up in but a single word: Involvement.

And that is the message I wish to leave with you.

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THE REALITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

- Candide Pineault

Whether we are concerned with the child and his problems as parents, educators, psychologists or jurists, our ultimate aim is to promote his rights, his interests and his happiness. Our aim may be the same; yet, the means used or advocated, the solutions suggested or imposed may differ considerably and may even be totally opposed. Where should our preference be? Highly publicized legal battles involving children have pitted jurists, sociologists, and parents against one another in recent years. Even peers sharing the same discipline have contradicted one another. Since the future of a person is involved, such imbroglios must in some way be resolved. This cannot be achieved unless each one accepts to transcend his own specialty to see in the child not a son, a student, a patient, or a simple citizen but rather the man he has already become!

It is thus necessary to forsake one's particular point of view in order to arrive at a more global and human perception centered on the sole interests of one whose rights as a person have not been determined up to now. The child then appears to be subjected too often to injustice and treated like a malleable "object" at the mercy of society because of his very weakness.

The urgency of the need for a precise formulation of the child's status becomes clearly evident and corresponds with the need for an appreciation of the value of the child considered since World War II as the centre of the world's attention and its greatest hope. Thus, in response to the joint urgings of every discipline and of every civilization, the United Nations solemnly proclaimed in 1959 a charter which is basically a guide essential to childhood and thus to each child. It is thus a useful complement to the declaration of the rights of man previously presented.

If we take stock now, can we say that the lot of the child has been bettered? Are his rights really being respected on a day-to-day basis and on a world scale?

Have there not been changes these last twenty years such that the charter is perhaps no longer altogether up-to-date?

What are the real needs and rights of the child today?

These are questions of the first order which are being brought to our attention on the eve of the International Year of the Child which has been set for 1979 by the United Nations.

I - Noteworthy changes in the status of the child and his place in the world since 1959

The charter of 1959 is general in scope. It affects at one and the same time all who are interested in the problems of childhood and those who are called upon to provide education and up-bringing. This charter defines precisely by means of ten concise and explicit principles what is to be understood by rights: the recognition of the child as a person requiring special protection, constant search for what is best for him regardless of his sex, colour, economic or social condition, or religion, and always, whatever the circumstances, keeping in mind respect for his liberty and for the dignity of the "man-to-be" that he represents.

A. - The United Nations creates international institutions to promote the interests of the child

In line with its intentions and under its own aegis, the United Nations sets up a series of international institutions which have as their aim the welfare of the child. The charter had hardly been completed when these institutions were already doing effective work.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), for example, is an organism created to come to the help of needy refugees, victims of the conflict of Arabs with Israel. It dispenses help in the fields of health, social assistance, education and professional training. At the same time, UNRWA scholarships have been set up for refugee children enrolled in public and private schools in receiving countries.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) helps improve agricultural development and distribution and provides considerable technical assistance aimed at raising the standard of living in under-developed countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) attempts to bring the highest degree possible of health care to all peoples thanks to various technical and cultural means.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) helps maintain world peace by bringing all nations to work together on common educational, scientific and cultural projects. Positive results were evident immediately after its creation. Thus, representatives of underdeveloped countries decide unanimously "to create in their own countries with its help a practical form of education adapted to their own particular economic and social systems and to try to eradicate illiteracy".

Finally, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is a United Nations fund whose aim is to help children. It contributes to the survival of the young in developing countries by providing emergency help in times of disaster. Since 1948, with the help of WHO and FAO, it contributes to the development of programs meant to satisfy not only immediate but also long-term needs of the countries being helped through vaccination campaigns of B.C.G. (antisyphilitic), and control of malaria. Considerable sums of money have been offered to these countries to further their economic and social development.

B. - Definite laws and regulations to improve the social condition of the child are ratified throughout the world

As each country is made aware of and becomes specifically interested in the problem of the status of the child, it tries to improve the child's own way of life as much as possible.

Thus in Canada during the last ten years, eighty-six laws and regulations were passed which touch upon the child (121 in the case of the Province of Quebec). There is a law dealing with the abandoned child and a decisive law of the Supreme Court dealing with litigations between parents. There are economic and social laws affecting the child only indirectly such as school-lunch programs to fight against malnutrition and come to the help of the poor. And there are juridical laws such as those dealing with criminal negligence with a penalty extending from ten years in prison to life in case of death.

In 1972 a children's aid bureau was created, followed in 1975 by a committee for the protection of the young, which has as its aim to protect children from physical abuse and, as much as possible, to promote family life and childhood interests.

France also has followed this trend within the last twenty years: the adoption law was changed in 1970 giving more status to the child as a "person". Needy mothers were helped; foundling homes and supervised foster home placements created, legitimation of the natural child through marriage or juridical procedures introduced. In 1972 the "shameful" designation identifying the child born of adultery or incest was replaced by the simple term "natural", and in most cases, became the same as those of the legitimate child. Social security opened up new possibilities: health insurance, family allowances, aid to handicapped minors, various specialized establishments for children afflicted with motor, sensorial, or mental disease as well as projects for the re-education of juvenile delinquents.

Finally, the whole world is cooperating in the field of medicine, and children are receiving individual care through preventive programs (vaccinations, school-centered programs, medical and family collaboration, diffusion of medical information through press, radio, television ...).

With the help of all these social changes, it is evident that the position of the happy, cared-for child has continued to improve. Unfortunately, this is not so for the child born disadvantaged and inevitably fated to remain neglected and inferior, little more than a "thing" to be exploited by adults or crushed by the social or economic system.

II - The actual condition of the child has not changed.

A. - Numerous rights are not respected

No one can deny today the need of the child for aid and protection; no one can refuse to come to the aid of the mistreated or helpless child, and yet, if we take a close look, how many children do we not find who are without protection, without the help they could and should receive? How many children are brought up in an unhealthy and abnormal way; how many are abused and degraded without people near them or the general public caring or reacting!

Whether due to insensitivity, ignorance, routine or error, the result is the same:

The child is not protected.

Public officials and private groups are certainly working hard to care for the needs of the child who has been abandoned or disoriented by the divorce of his parents. But what are they doing to prevent him from being abandoned, his family from being broken up. Can it be said that they are assuring his protection and defending his rights, that they are seeing to having his liberty and dignity respected?

Induced abortion, which is nothing less than murder of the innocent, is accepted in our day almost everywhere in the world although contraceptive methods have already been sufficiently developed to forestall the need for such an extreme measure.

Legal abandonment of the child: In many countries this is accepted procedure for anyone for whatever reason provided only that the proper forms and legal procedures be duly taken into account. In such cases the State not only accepts the act of abandonment without requiring a declaration or justification of motives, but also confers a legal value on the act which, if needs be, it will even defend. Instead of protecting the possible rights of the child, is not the State protecting the desertion of the parents by recognizing their right to anonymity, freeing them from their parental obligations, and promising to keep secret the details of the child's birth?

Divorce causes disruption in the life of the child. The State intervenes only after it has taken place to see to a just and equitable division of community belongings! But was the child a part of these belongings or of this community? If he was part of the community, should he not have had something to say in the decision designed to break it up? Did he not have a right to be heard? At any rate, his fate should have been taken into consideration; it should have been given a hearing.

Do we take his dignity into account? Where is his freedom to act when his whole future is closely linked to the sole will and arbitrary decisions of adults (parents or judges, whichever!), who go on acting solely in their own interest or for so-called higher interests of the child defined according to juridical criteria taken in a strict or a general sense?

The child is not free as is clearly evident in the preceding case. Neither is he in a comfortable family situation when his parents cannot distinguish between liberty and caprice, liberty and spontaneity, liberty and total license. This child "king" more than anyone else has to satisfy his requirements. Is not liberty made evident in the rational and voluntary conduct of the committed person? And should not the child be able to learn by doing?

Does liberty exist for the child who is merely the "property" of his parents, their goods (it is said elsewhere that he "belongs" to them!). He then is and remains right up to maturity a helpless being who not only needs someone to help him but also someone to do for him what he cannot do for himself, even initiate and carry out his projects. How can such a child learn to develop his own freedom of action? Sometimes he is treated like a rebel who needs to be subdued, toughened and trained; otherwise said, as if the ideal were to make him docile and submissive to adults, first of all, and then later on to make of him an honest, well-organized and active worker. Is there liberty in such an arrangement which prevents him from following a higher personalized ideal (or a lower one) if he so chooses?

The child is too often mistreated. The child is even sometimes subjected to physical abuse. However, we should admit that at times this is administered unintentionally by parents who are unable to face up to their own personal and family problems. But the results are the same. This failing may result from personality problems, immaturity, conjugal problems, mental or emotional insufficiency or defectiveness (some parents who experienced being screamed at and struck as children now use this type of pressure and persuasion exclusively for the education of their own offspring). Unfortunately, we can prove that abusive parents also use moral or verbal violence and malice and that whatever communication they may have with their offspring serves only to belittle them or affect them adversely in some other negative way.

Van Stolk reveals in The Battered Child in Canada (1972) that such instruments as the belt, electric wiring, and the fly swatter are in current use as "instruments of torture". For added effectiveness, such threats as "The police is coming" and "I will lock you up in the closet" are added.

Internationally accepted statistics reveal that each year about 2000 Quebec children are victims of physical abuse. About 5% of them die as the result of wounds inflicted by adults, and 40% will be afflicted all their lives with their physical and psychic consequences. According to Henri Kempe's report, if we include in the child abuse classification all cases of physical abuse, physical and emotional neglect and sexual abuse, we arrive at a grand total of 300,000 cases (for 1974) for all the American States: 60,000 are classified as severe, 6000 as giving rise of permanent injury and 2000 as resulting in death.

Out of these, 60% are less than three years of age and 24% less than one. This clearly shows how vulnerable the nursling or young child is with respect to his parents.

Emotional neglect due to serious friction between parents affects the child psychologically just as much as physical abuse and sometimes even more. He becomes "traumatized" and shows various signs of maladjustment at school. He may be unresponsive for prolonged periods, or he may later reveal various more deep-seated problems.

The child is not always protected against all forms of exploitation. If earlier forms of child exploitation have disappeared, new forms have been developed such as the financial enslavement of growing numbers of young consumers, the prostitution of minors or the drug problem. Opinions concerning these are not yet clearcut and pertinent laws have not yet been enacted, but these situations are unfortunately much too widespread today.

Is there equal opportunity when resources available to children vary so enormously, when certain life-styles remove all taste for culture while others encourage it, when there are even specific exclusions which prevent some from gaining access to a superior culture or even an elementary culture?

As we well know, there are social and economic traditions which reserve access to culture to the well-born and the moneyed. What equality of opportunity can there be between the child born in an underdeveloped country and another in an economically rich country? Access to education which is the only means of social advancement for the socially disadvantaged is not within the reach of all. Nor is the appeal of education the same for economically deprived societies as it is for more advanced civilizations.

The right to education is not respected for various reasons.

Economic reasons: The obligation of finding work at a very young age is found to be a vital necessity in most third world or developing countries because of dire poverty and an unfavourable economic situation. Children who should by right be at school enter the labour market at a very early age to help meet the needs of the whole family. From 2% to 10% of the work force is made up of children under 15 years of age and 20% of children between the ages of 15 and 19. This sets up a vicious circle for they are readily hired instead of adults as they are unable to claim social benefits or even a raise in the pitiful salary given them.

Social reasons: The legal minimum working age which varies from 12 to 16 is rarely respected though well known to public officials who are content to profit from this situation quite as much as others. Moreover, most of the countries on the way to development do not yet have the basic legislation and institutional infrastructures needed to maintain social services for children and other vulnerable groups. Less than 60% of the children between 5 and 12 or 14 years of age go to school in the third world, and especially Africa, because no practical educational system adapted to the needs of these countries has been developed. Traditional academic education provided by countries which have been subjected to the misfortune of colonization continue to train large numbers of potential employees far in excess of the number of available positions. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient equipment, of facilities, of educational text books and qualified professors resulting from the limited means at their disposal prevents young people from pursuing their studies. It should also be noted that, contrary to the expressed wishes of the charter, education is not everywhere mandatory: eighteen countries in Africa,[1] eleven in Asia,[2] four in Oceania,[3] have no current legislation of this kind. This necessarily gives rise to considerable illiteracy. UNESCO statistics demonstrate that in 1970, 80% of the population of Africa and India was made up of illiterates and 75% of the Middle East with 100% illiteracy among the women of Saudi-Arabia. A global evaluation shows that 34% of the adult world population of 780 million persons was illiterate at that time and that, out of 198 countries in the world, 97 had an illiteracy rate of over 50%. This was especially true in developing countries. As we have just made evident, there is small hope of seeing fulfilled the desire expressed in the United Nations Charter to have each child "benefit from an education which provides general culture allowing him to develop his faculties, his personal judgement and his sense of moral and social responsiblity under conditions of equal opportunity".

How could it be otherwise? How can we ask these persons to feed their intellect when the majority of them are dying of hunger! It goes without saying that they cannot implement principle two of the declaration, "grow and develop in a healthy and normal way".

The basically vital right to food is not respected. According to a recent FAO report, a third or rather even a half of the present world population is undernourished or poorly fed. The people of the third world are especially affected where out of 800 million children, more than two thirds are afflicted with diseases or handicaps due to low-protein, low-calorie malnutrition or aggravated by it. The rate of infant mortality is thus very high, three to ten times that of industrialized countries, for it is evident that if the adult is poorly nourished, the child's condition is twice as bad. And if he should survive during the first six months thanks to nourishment coming directly from his mother, he will weaken rapidly after this is discontinued. A large number die before having reached the age of five. (The infant mortality rate for children below one is 100 per thousand in many countries of Asia and Latin America and over 200 per thousand in certain countries of Africa).

And if, by chance, they happen to survive in spite of the hazards of malnutrition, they are still at the mercy of various diseases which affect them (respiratory or endemic diseases which are still extant today in tropical and sub-tropical areas). Those who live through this second challenge often remain mentally handicapped or how signs of mental deficiency or retarded development. More than 300 million children are so afflicted in today's world.

The picture becomes even darker if we consider that once adulthood has been attained, life expectancy depends not only on actual conditions of nutrition but also on the care and nourishment previously received.

Unfortunately, it is not only poor countries that are afflicted by malnutrition. A report published in 1973 by Canadian Social Welfare Council entitled "One child, one chance..." tells us that people are "dying of hunger". In most cases, this is the result of a nutritionally poor or inadequate diet which seriously affects physical or mental development. A 1971 survey taken by the Montreal Board of Health and the Catholic School Commission of the same city shows that out of 3,500 children who were given a medical examination, more than half were very sick physically, 10% were in need of immediate hospitalization; such diseases as anaemia, impetigo, rickets and respiratory infections were very prevalent. It seems that lack of money or lack of knowledge concerning basic nutritional needs are the principal causes.

Sad to say the right to sufficient nourishment is not granted to each child; nor is the major portion of what the charter would want each child to have because of existing social conditions, limited or erroneous conceptions of what constitutes a good life held by certain individuals and archaic legislation which in no way contributes to the recognition of the child as a "full-fledged person" in our society.

B. - Practical problems preventing the full application of certain rights of the child

That of actualizing absolute equality among children. No one today is against accepting the principle of natural basic equality among children, but there are certain habits of thought and action which are nevertheless maintained in order, so it seems, to protect equal or superior interests. Some may believe themselves authorized to violate this principle in spite of its evident justice. Such is the case for one of the outstanding problems of our western world, that of the proper differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate children. Even to this day we find commentaries in journals dealing with the child which present serious reservations concerning the principle of equality.

> Breaking into the family circle for the sake of the child born out of wedlock, proclaiming a total equality of inheritance rights which would infringe upon the rights of recognized members of the family, affecting to recognize in practice extra-marital conception as a natural right for all men, to my way of thinking, would undermine the basic structures of the family even though we are all agreed that these constitute the very first foundation of the basic rights of the child.[4]

Whether we wish to or not, do we not in such an instance admit an exception to the rule, treating legitimate children like a superior race whose rights are inviolable while treating illegitimate children like children of an inferior rank who must remain content with left overs if there are any? Is it not reprehensible to refuse to a human being recognition of his full dignity as a person? Why should the child born of adultery be penalized because of a circumstance of birth? Why should he not have the same rights as the legitimate child?

Should we then in the name of a greater justice, do away with such classifications as legitimate, illegitimate or adulterine child so that children may be on an absolutely equal footing? Would such a radical solution even be possible or desirable? Can the simple suppression of such classification improve the actual family situation?

Children born out of wedlock rarely have the opportunity of growing up with their reunited parents. To give equal treatment to all children, we should either destroy all families so that none will have one or give a family to each child. Even then the families themselves would not be equal.

Even though the declaration specifies that all children are to be treated alike, it remains nevertheless true that the child born in wedlock and the child, legitimate or not, brought up by parents are in a situation different from that of a child who has been abandoned by his parents.

Problem of the illegitimate child's name. This problem is a natural consequence of the situation.

In certain countries, the juridical and social context is such that the recognition of this right seems difficult and often even contrary to the interests of the children or their relatives.

If it is true that a child is usually happy to know and hear the name of his parents, is it not true, nevertheless, that it may be preferable that he not know nor hear a name which reveals an irregular situation or has been dishonoured? It would be in the best interests of the child that he be given a name and a civil status invented for the purpose so as to seem like any other. At the least, he should be declared born of unknown parents. But who would be taken in by either arrangement? His neighbours who know about him already? The child himself who will be all the more upset if he finds out about his real situation only later on in life?

Perhaps the solution would be that the child know his real name but freely accept to make use of the fictitious or invented name and civil status. Even then it remains true that this lie against society may disturb the child who may feel his personality is in some way affected by it. Moreover, may he not feel frustrated if he compares himself with the legitimate child?

Can an intermediate solution be found which will, at one and the same time, satisfy the requirements of society, safeguard the dignity of the parents and respect the greater good of the child?

Problems from use of such terms as "abandoned" and "neglected".

These words are invested with unbearably shameful connotations so that parents find it hard to decide to abandon their child even when this is for the best interests of the child, and judges hesitate to pronounce on criminal neglect even when there is good reason for doing so. This is why there is an ever growing number of children who are morally abandoned, neglected, or abused.

As for unknown parents, how many who are so designated are nevertheless known to civic officials, doctors, or midwives who choose to keep the secret?

Problem of the handicapped child. If we speak of the social situation as it is, who will not honestly admit that the handicapped child is, in fact, treated as an inferior with respect to the normal child in spite of all the means placed at his disposal to attain normality; technical, medical and attitudinal means affecting both him and his surroundings.

Eugenists and racists willingly neglect infants who are less than normal or hopelessly afflicted for they are not an asset to the purity of the race. And people in general, recognizing their inability to relieve real suffering are brought to wish for or even provoke the death of the crippled, the deformed and the abandoned, believing this to be an act of true charity. And there are some who for reasons of misguided pride or affection are opposed to furthering the education of deficient children up to the limit of their capabilities.

How to combine educational responsibility with respect for the liberty of the child? It is admittedly only natural for parents and educators to make decisions for the child who is unable to do so for himself. However, certain decisions like the choice of a particular religion or of a particular type of education may determine the future of the child. Do we have the right to limit in this way the freedom of choice which will later be his? If the child even now opposes these decisions, can he be forced to accept them?

Beyond the fact that one can never make up for lost time, there is the consideration that a child who has never had to come to grips with problems may not have received a real education. Does the easy solution of side-stepping the problem by waiting for the child to choose for himself later on really serve the best interests of the child?

Problem regarding discipline. Finally, the right of parents to discipline an unruly or vicious child and administer corporal punishment has always and everywhere been recognized as stemming from both natural and civil law; striking or spanking a child are considered normal means of coercion. What is essential is that these punishments remain light, not going beyond reasonable limits nor resulting in lasting effects affecting the health of the child. But what are the criteria which allow one to determine when physical violence may be apt to go beyond reasonable limits?

As for moral violence, it often leaves even more indelible traces than physical violence. Finally, however that may be, one must not depend on abusive parents to appeal to social services for help. They are often mistrustful of those who try to pry into their family affairs.

Finally, principle ten of the declaration seeks to protect the child from the effects of "practices which can lead to racial or religious discrimination or any other form of discrimination..." but...

The child is subjected to racial discrimination. In spite of the profound desire for universal brotherhood and world unity and peace which provides fertile ground for the development of such attitudes in children, paradoxically, in certain parts of the world, there is a muted or violent opposition to this trend, and children are obliged to adopt the prejudices of their parents and empassioned persons who wish to maintain long-established discriminatory practices.

Such is the case in South Africa where children, even in spite of themselves, become part of the "apartheid" system of discrimination and segregation which nurtures a constant climate of animosity between Blacks and Whites. That a white child should be prevented from playing with a black child solely on account of racial prejudice seems to be an aberration in the twentieth century! But this situation exists and receives police backing.

The child suffers from religious discrimination. Is this not the case in Ireland today where endless conflict is pitting Catholics against Protestants in bloody battles? How can a child who all his youth long has lived in an atmosphere riddled with hostility towards neighbours of a different religious persuasion not have this attitude himself later on?

The child is subjected to religious and political discrimination. The child is subjected to religious and political discrimination in countries affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict which has yet to be resolved.

The child is inevitably subjected to another form of discrimination which may be called "political", though of a latent kind, in such countries as Vietnam, with its division into North and South, and Germany, divided into East and West, where hostile negative sentiments divide the countries.

These various forms of discrimination to which the child is subjected nurture in him ideas which are opposed to the ideal of universal brotherhood expressed in the charter.

It can thus be seen that a multitude of problems prevent the rights of the child from being respected. These problems grow out of the complexity of certain social and economic structures or of the proposed idealized solutions which defy practical application. Others not mentioned in the 1959 charter appear to us today as essential rights of the child as a "person".

III - Omissions of the declaration

The United Nations never pretended to draw up a perfect and exhaustive declaration. The fact that there had been considerable evolution since the declaration of Geneva was an invitation to modesty. There was no reason to believe that they knew all that was to be known about the child and so could pretend to say everything. Omissions are thus seen to be normal. But it may be useful to point them out.

The child's right to life. How can we not be surprised to note that this right was left unmentioned at the very time when the practice of abortion was becoming widespread, and the murder of infants who were recognized as abnormal or thought to be so became accepted as excusable if not permitted?

The charter principle does declare that even before birth the child has rights and among them the right to live and to develop, but it does not say when that right begins to exist, what marks its coming into being. At what point of development can an embryo be said to be a human being with the right to life?

The vague formulation of the declaration is perhaps intentional to leave countries free to pursue their own course either allowing therapeutic abortion or condemning all abortion!

The rights of parents. Up to what age does a child owe obedience to his parents? Under what conditions do his rights give way to theirs? When can a child begin to stand up for his own rights? A child possesses rights as a person at all times and should be able to exercise these rights whenever he so wishes and, if there is need, with the help and assistance of his parents. It is up to the parents as guardians of their child to make his cause their own, to promote and defend his rights though these may oppose their own desires or interests or even go against or seem to go against their own rights as persons.

Rights of inheritance (of name or of possessions). If this were not a vital right essential to every person, child or adult, its omission in the declaration could be easily explained. However, this remains a serious and even insoluble problem for certain children as we have seen above. This right is merely tolerated and even then, in a niggardly way, for certain natural children who have been identified and recognized. It is disregarded with impunity in the case of others. Numerous laws in countries throughout the world currently deny this right to natural children. Laws proclaim and uphold these rights only for children who are legitimate or legitimized.

Right to religion. In the declaration of human rights, it is stated that: "every person has a right to liberty of thought, of conscience and of religion". No mention is made of the child as such. May parents choose a religion for the child, or should they wait until the child is able to choose for himself? (This problem is related to that of personal liberty treated above). At what point in time can a child on his own change his religion or adopt one? Should we conclude that this problem of the freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion is included in the general problem of education and thus subject to the same rules? Ideally speaking, such education means that parents should introduce their child to their own religion from birth since the child is then unable to make a choice. Then, without imposing their will, they may encourage the child to continue in this orientation if he so desires. But it is essential that his liberty be respected, and that they act according to his will rather than their own as soon as that is made evident.

Right to acquire personal autonomy. Though probably no thought was given to this right in 1959 at the time of the ratification of the charter, it is a right which today is seen to be essential to the child. While still very young, the child should be provided with material, intellectual, and effective means which will help him learn to assume responsibility for his own subsistence and his own actions. We are concerned here not only with education but with the whole network of parent-child-social relationships whose harmonious functioning should lead the child to maturity. Indifference, aggressiveness, the example of crime or of vice are obstacles to the acquisition of personal autonomy. The adverse effect of an unhealthy or hostile environment can cause him to get into trouble and set him on the road to delinquency. The development of his personal autonomy would thus be retarded or compromised.

Terminological difficulties of the declaration. Though principle six seems categorical when taken as a whole, it is difficult to put into concrete terms for practical purposes. How can we tell exactly when the famous phrase "inasmuch as possible" comes into play or ceases to be effective in the statement "inasmuch as possible the child should grow up under the responsible protection of his parents". How can one determine whether or not an atmosphere of material, moral and effective security has been provided?

So far as principle nine is concerned, it states that a child should not be allowed to join the work force before attaining the appropriate minimum age. But what is the appropriate age? The age of ten when the normal child is able to fend for himself, or a later age such as fifteen or eighteen?

We conclude from this study that the fate of the child is not always enviable. His rights are limited and those he can really enjoy are so influenced by difficulties arising from the economic and social context in which he lives that he hardly profits from them.

How can this be otherwise when the society of which he is a part or his parents are not better provided for?

Was it therefore utopistic on the part of the United Nations to think that summarizing in ten concise principles all that the child could hope for to become comfortably integrated within every society would be sufficient by that fact alone to ensure its immediate implementation? Certainly not. Such was not its aim. Its very modest aim in 1959 was to draw up a code understood and accepted by all humanity expressing a determined will to work for the true promotion of the child as a full-fledged human being, free and endowed with both his dignity and the extraordinary potential he represents for us in the times ahead.

But twenty-five years have gone by since the ratification of the charter which, though well-adapted to that period and the post-war situation, may appear under certain aspects somewhat archaic because of certain suggestions, deficiencies or omissions. Considered original at the outset, its principles today seem self-evident because of the evolution of humanity towards higher ideals. Certain oversights or omissions, perhaps intentional at that time, deserve to be mentioned today. In view of the special and pressing needs of the child in 1979, the scope of his recognized rights should be broadened and these rights defined so that the purpose of the charter may be realized through the resolute and concerted effort of people everywhere working for the child's happiness and future well-being. Thus in our day the charter will not be treated merely like an outdated historical document but rather, according to the wish of the United Nations, like "an essential guide which those whose mission it is to look after the welfare of the child cannot and should not ignore".

The United Nations has chosen the year 1979 as the international year of the child. This provides us with an ideal opportunity to suggest to internationally influential groups that a re-working and modernization of the charter may be in order.

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Detailed Bibliography is included at the end of the Report.

REALITIES OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN - A REACTION

- Rosemary Milne

Dr. Pineault's paper has given a vision of the problem - the realities of our achievements for the children of the world. She has been able to draw our attention to additional areas of concern about children that the Children's Charter has not covered. Dr. Pineault has argued that the scope of the recognized rights of children should be broadened to include these.

Whilst sharing her concern for all the issues she has raised, my reaction is that, instead of adding to the present Charter, we should discard the concept of special rights for children. Children should have no special rights. Our failures of the past twenty-five years show us that it is not helpful to separate them off in terms of rights.

I think it is more useful to look upon the content of the present Charter as providing simply a guide to areas where action is needed. The specific content of our focus may change according to culture or time.

We do not need special rights for children, as their rights are the same as those of all human kind. They are set down in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and detailed in its thirty articles. The one over-riding principle behind the Declaration is the universal right to justice - justice in terms of each person having an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties that is compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. This is the over-riding right of every person in the world. This right to equal consideration is irrespective of age, just as it is irrespective of mental ability, physical strength, religion, race, parenthood, etc. The child has the same right as every person, no more and no less.

Also the child has the same fundamental responsibility as every person. For each individual, his or her fundamental right to receive justice is inextricably bound to a fundamental responsibility to act justly, that is, to treat each other person with equal respect and consideration. The responsibility to act justly is also irrespective of age; the youngest child has the same responsibility as the wisest elder, to consider equally the needs of each other person at the highest level of reasoning and action of which he or she is capable.

It is only by affirming this principle of universal justice, that we can deal rationally with all the other issues, for the needs of children must be regarded equally in relation to the needs of all others.

If we start making exceptions to universal rights, in favour of special categories such as children, we confuse the issues. Children may then finish up with an impressively long list of special rights, many of which will be unclaimable because they conflict with the rights of others.

If we assume special rights on the basis of age, we leave the door open for others to assume special rights on the basis of, for example, race.

It is only if we keep focusing back to the basic right of all persons to equal respect and consideration, that the areas in the Children's Charter, and the additional problems which Dr. Pineault has raised, can be clarified in terms of action.

We should focus on this one over-riding principle to work from in all cases of determining specific action for children. It is the same principle whether the issue is food, health, wealth, inheritance, education, religion or any other significant issues that may arise in particular places at particular times. It is the same principle for children as for adults.

Translating the principle of universal justice into action, is largely a matter of preventing societal obstruction to the fulfilment of rational needs and desires. Children are relatively helpless and in need of special protection in relation to the implementation of the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration. Others in our communities also need special protection of their basic right to equality, e.g. the aged. Many groups have special needs but this does not necessarily imply special rights.

Special needs merely indicate areas where basic human needs require special arrangements to see that they are justly met.

The needs of young children are the same universal needs of all persons - safety, food, shelter, self-esteem, group affilitation, love.

We have a responsibility to guard the right of all persons who, through extreme youth, or extreme old age, or any other factor, may need support for their claims.

Individuals may choose to waive their own rights, to sacrifice themselves for children, but in this case they are voluntarily choosing to move beyond the realm of right. To value an action of sacrifice for the sake of children's welfare is fundamentally different from claiming that children have special rights.

We bring to this seminar our special motivation towards children, and special skills of working in this area. Our commission is to advise on the welfare of the world's children. But we must not wear emotional blinkers in carrying out this commission. Our recommendations for children will not, and should not, be implemented if they impinge on the equal rights of every person. We should discard the Children's Charter as a charter of special rights and focus back to the Universal Declaration as the statement of rights. Working from this we can then, at any time, focus on specific situations where the rights of children are being obstructed. We will do a disservice to the children of the world, unless what we claim as their right is ultimately no more, and no less, than that which we claim for all human kind.

CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

I

- Terry Carney

> *"It is in the case of children, that misapplied notions of liberty are a real obstacle to the fulfilment by the state of its duties. One would almost think that a man's children were supposed to be literally, and not metaphorically, a part of himself, so jealous is opinion of the smallest interference of law with his absolute and exclusive control over them; more jealous than of almost any interference with his own freedom of action: so much less do the generality of mankind value liberty than power."*
>
> J. S. Mill, On Liberty (1859), 1971 reprint of 1912 Oxford Uni. Press World Classics ed.) Oxford Uni. Press, London, 128.

(1) The Issues

The triad of relationships between the child, the parent or custodian of the child and the state provide the grist for the analysis of the position of the child in society.[1] The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child promulgated in 1959 after a gestation period of 9 years (but drawing on the Geneva declaration adopted by the League of Nations in 1924)[2] purports to embody a minimum statement of those relationships viewed from the perspective of the child. The theme of this Conference - focusing on the realities of that declaration - is particularly apt, enabling issues last considered at the national conference on the rights of the child (Nov. 1974)[3] to be further analysed. Central to that debate has been the evolution of the conflict from a two way tension between the paternal jurisdiction of the state and the parent who was assumed to embody and reflect the interests of the child towards the present position where the interests of the child are increasingly being considered not to be coincident with those of the parent or caretaker.[4] Parallel with that development, the capacity of the state to adequately define the desirable goals of child care or to select defensible criteria for determining intervention, and the capacity of the law to implement those goals and criteria, have increasingly been called into question.[5]

If the nature of the issues and interests to be reconciled has become more complex, the relevance and adequacy of the Declaration has not escaped attention. Several contributors at the 1974 conference drew attention to the excessive generality of the language and suggested that not only did this factor render it a largely meaningless document, but when coupled with its low status as a document outside the corpus of mainstream international law, rendered it an impotent piece of rhetoric.[6]

More fundamentally, it was contended that the concept of "rights" was a misnomer, deflecting attention away from the crucial issues of defining and protecting the interests of children as balanced against competing interests.[7] That critique has been neatly encapsulated by Rodham who argued that "children's rights" is no more than a "slogan in search of a definition".[8] Both the interests to be reconciled and the Declaration which sought to resolve them are therefore in a state of flux.

The specific implications of this broad debate and reassessment cannot easily be drawn out in the context of education and preschool education for the young child, even if education is viewed in a very wide sense. To the extent that the Declaration contains provisions relevant to this area, they can be characterized as erring towards over emphasizing "benevolent paternalism and bland hopefulness" at the expense of providing too little scope or emphasis on the child's "right to be free within himself, to develop as a self determining questioning and autonomous person".[9] At its highest, this critique would contend that the "rights" conferred by the Declaration should more accurately be characterized as a statement of the interests of society in moulding a child to fit a preordained image of the ideal adult.[10] J. S. Mill expressed his concern that the liberties and freedoms of the individual might be infringed in this manner[11] and although society is now less concerned to exclude the state from accepting responsibility for providing (as distinct from funding) education, the principle has been applied in other contexts to question rigidity of curricula; age and I.Q. grading;[12] stifling of creative abilities and so forth.

The sharpness of that debate has been somewhat clouded in this context by the more obvious relevance and validity of the assumption made both by the legal system and in the wider social culture that young children are presumed to be "incompetent beings ... not fully competent to determine and safeguard their interests."[13] The delineation of the interests of the child is made more difficult by virtue of the fact that the professional literature and research evidence on child development does not speak with one voice concerning the nature of any inherent potential needs or capacities of early childhood or clarify the relationship to environmental or external factors.[14] Perhaps most critical of all is the contention advanced by Skolnick that many theories reflect cultural variables or measure the impact of particular institutions such as the school in establishing primary characteristics of childhood.[15] In short, there are no clearcut external definitions or benchmarks for establishing the boundaries between programmes or policies which serve the interests of children and those which in fact derogate from those interests and advance competing interests of society or parents.

This dilemma is not confined to this area but it is rather more acute because one cannot fall back on the attractive solution available in the case of the older child by granting recognition of an autonomous right of action and decision on the part of the child. To date, society has sought to solve this question by specifying that decisions serve the goal of advancing the "welfare and best interests of the child" - a proposition also adopted by the declaration.[16] However, although that formula is superficially appealing, it has come under sustained attacks over recent years on the ground that it simply provides "an empty vessel into which adult perceptions and prejudices are poured".[17] If this is an accurate critique, attention must be redirected towards an examination of the nature of the relationship between parent, child and society in an attempt to locate other guiding principles for action.

(2) The Present Position

If, as Rodham has suggested, "children's rights" is a "slogan in search of a definition", a legal definition has proved to be a particularly elusive quarry in Australia. Although there have been a number of enquiries and reports in recent years,[18] Australia has lagged behind most other western states in updating the law relating to children. As a result, neither the present legislation nor the case law provides clearcut specifications of the rights of children. To the extent that the law confers rights for children, it does so in a derivative manner by erecting a basic presumption that these rights are coincident with those of the parent or custodian of the child. Only in comparatively extreme situations such as those involving delinquency, physical neglect, maltreatment or disruption of the family unit, does the law permit the state to step in to promote the welfare of the child as an independent person.

For the "normal" child, rights and interests are equated with the rights and interests of the adult members of the family unit, subject to certain negative rights should the family step outside the fairly robust standards of acceptable child raising behaviour. These negative rights are of a fairly rudimentary nature, covering procedural matters; entitlements to be removed from a damaging environment and so forth, but their most striking characteristic is that they do not become operative until circumstances have deteriorated to crisis level. These negative rights accrue, broadly speaking, only at the point where the child is liable to be defined as abnormal by virtue of the fact that the process of juvenile justice, operating under the auspices of the Children's Court or the family law jurisdiction, has been set in motion. Very few rights of a positive, preventive character are provided on a universal basis for all children. The historical legacy from the nineteenth century of legislation and services designed to cater for delinquent and neglected children still dominates the field.[19]

(3) The Policy Base

The present state of the law in equating the interests of children with those of their parents reflects an outdated policy that the family unit must be protected at all costs in order to promote the stability of the family and ultimately of society at large. Arguably, that policy was defensible when the extended family was undergoing a transition to the mobile nuclear family of today as a result of the pressures of industrialization, but the nuclear family has now demonstrated that it is a fairly robust institution in its own right. The "hands off" policy can therefore no longer be justified solely in order to preserve the integrity of the family unit.

An alternate rationale must be found. Modern proponents of this policy would point to the importance of shielding the internal operations and relationships within the family unit from scrutiny by the state, viewing it as a central element of the concept of privacy and a guarantee of the right of families to adopt particular lifestyles or values so crucial to the preservation of the pluralist and open community.

The difficulty which most commentators have with that line of argument is that it promotes plurality and privacy, not as between individuals but only as between aggregations of people living in a family unit. For adults presented with a viable option to remain in, or to terminate, their membership of that unit, the benefit flowing from the protection cast around the relationships by the recognition of an interest in privacy more than compensates for any derogation from the rights and integrity of the individual. But for adults, we now rightly insist that there be a real, as opposed to a theoretical, freedom of choice. Fetters, whether imposed by the now repealed fault grounds of the old Matrimonial Causes Act or by economic necessity facing women in the absence of alternate housing in women's refuges, (or adequate social security pension entitlements), should reverse the community judgement that these units be regarded as sacrosanct from state intervention. That same line of argument ought to cause the community to re-examine its approach to the definition and enforcement of the rights of all children - and in particular the position of children who are neither neglected nor delinquent.

(4) Responsibility for the Rights of the Child

It is taken to be axiomatic that all children ought to be entitled at law to basic minimum standards of income security, housing, education and community services designed to meet their needs. Furthermore, there should be adequate procedures to enable children, or third parties on their behalf, to initiate action on a unilateral basis to secure these entitlements. Those procedures should be designed to ensure that there is a fair hearing of the grievance, whether it be a grievance against a state instrumentality such as the Education or Social Welfare Department or a complaint against the actions of a private citizen. Taken alone, however, such reforms are likely to prove to be but palliatives with but a limited impact on the underlying structural problems. For it must be conceded that the difficulties of framing meaningful statements of goals and decision making criteria which plagued the discussion of the Declaration will also apply in this area unless other more effective reform strategies can be developed.

This paper would contend that such a strategy does exist but it is to be found running against the mainstream trends of reform which tend to favour centralization and standardization of decision making in the hands of government departments (or non government institutions) and courts. By contrast, it is asserted here that the solution lies in devolving powers and responsbilities (plus adequate resources and finance) back to local communities and networks, coupled with reforms designed to ensure that citizen and decisionmaker (or decision making collectives) can deal with each other as equals and negotiate solutions to particular problems rather than have them imposed externally. Already there are some local examples of this reform strategy. For example, in the educational context Victoria has devolved some (rather limited) powers to representative school councils.[20] The child maltreatment report advocated fostering the development of appropriate community values and attitudes to this issue and suggested that a broad and diffused category of people in local communities be granted some powers and responsibilities in mobilizing services to the maltreated child.[21] Similar strategies underlie the Federal government's handicapped child allowance, providing cash support for retarded or handicapped children[22] and serious consideration might be given to developing techniques which would make an equivalent range of educational choices available to handicapped children presently educated in government "special schools" as is available for other children.[23] In the area of community development, schemes such as the Social Welfare Department's Family and Community Services Programme[24] should be preferred to the more centalized "service" oriented, Early Childhood Development Complexes programmes. Finally, in the child welfare field, the proposed Victorian government amendments, designed to provide more equality into the provisions governing parent/S.W.D. agreements to admit children as wards of the state[25] and the concept of "non adjudicative" juvenile aid panels operating as an alternative to the Children's Court in Scotland, New Zealand, Western Australia and South Australia reinforce this trend.[26]

(5) Conclusion

The realities of the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child cannot be assessed in isolation from the cultural context or the passage of time. It is a relative, not an immutable document. Whatever its relevance in earlier times or for other cultures, the Declaration is now largely a spent force in western industrial countries. The stirring rhetoric no longer inspires individuals or governments to action; the balmy generality of language obscures the complex tension between the interests of the child, the parent or caretaker and the state; the empty phrase of the " best interests of the child" glosses over the critical policy issue of the degree of autonomy to be granted to the family unit. Finally, it sidesteps the philosophic debate concerning the limits which should be placed on state, professional or familial authority where that authority leads to an unreasonable degree of stultifying uniformity for those who conform, and to the risk of a stigmatizing "deviant" label for those children who reject that (usually benevolently motivated) paternal intervention.

This paper has argued that the time is now ripe for the Charter to be supplemented by a second phase strategy. That second phase strategy would, however, require the adoption of fundamentally different techniques to the highly centralized government programmes which have, with some measure of success, fleshed out the terms of the Charter during the first phase. What is now required is not a further proliferation of static services dominated by professional people, but programmes which recognize the plurality of values of the community and provide maximum scope for children to express their creative and developmental potential. All that is required is that governments should accept responsibility for providing people with a sufficient degree of access to, and real command over, the physical resources necessary to create an environment for children which reflects their values, culture and local perceptions of needs and interests. The triad or relationships between the child, parent(s) or caretaker(s) and the community may be complex but it does have resiliance and - given the correct conditions - a capacity to make responsible decisions.

Over recent years, there has been a tendency for the state to arrogate to itself more and more responsibility for making these decisions. Not only has that fostered an unhealthy trend towards uniformity and conformity, but it has also led to a derogation of the rights of the community, the child and even the family unit. By diminishing respect for the capacities of these bodies to make responsible decisions, the state has assumed a dominant if not yet a monopoly position. That monopoly position, as Mill so accurately foresaw, carries a potential for a substantial infringement of human rights, albeit under a benevolent guise. The solution, it is contended, lies in the devolution of real power and control back to local communities and groups and in greater recognition of the role to be played by each of the three interests in the triad of relationships.

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CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS IN A CHANGING SOCIETY: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

II

- Lorraine Riach

Children, Parents and Society

At the National Children's Bureau annual conference in 1972 Mia Kellmer Pringle presented a paper entitled "Are Parents Necessary?" She began with the proposition that "available evidence suggests that it is through a stable, continuous, dependable and loving relationship with others, who enjoy a rewarding relationship with one another, that a child is enabled to develop his potentialities to the full" (National Children's Bureau, 1972). To provide for children an environment that matches that description. To provide for children a quality of care that matches that description. To accompany these with an understanding that childhood socialization needs to be experienced in an environment that leads to the optimal development of personal autonomy. These are the responsibilities that, in western industrial societies, have become the cornerstone of the parental role. Society has placed the integration of the child into the social world firmly within the social unit called the family. It is the current relationship between childhood socialization, the role of parents and the role of society that is explored in this paper.

Equilibrium in the Relationship between Parents, Children and Society?

Rhona and Robert Rapoport (Rapoport R. & Rapoport R., 1977) claim that a state of harmony between children, parents and society exists when the responses and the expectations of parents meet both the needs of children and the requisites and demands of society.

In all societies there are some parents, perhaps even a majority of parents, who are able to meet the needs of their children in ways that are beneficial to the children, rewarding to the parents and within the expectations held of parents by the wider society. But in societies like our own, often described as western post-industrial societies, there is evidence of increasing concern that this state of harmony is not always present. Selected because they are representative of research that focuses upon a disequilibrium in the relationships between parents, children and society the writers whose works are cited below raise questions of concern to all who desire to see children experiencing their childhood under optimal conditions.

Rapoport & Rapoport claim that we see "lip-service (only) to our society being child focused while families are left to carry out the responsibilities of child-rearing for society as well as for themselves. Yet when families fail society pays a high price" (Rapoport R. & Rapoport R., 1977). This reminds us that society makes demands in terms of the outcomes of child-rearing but it does not normally share the responsibilities of parenting.

Q. Should society share more actively the responsibility of rearing the children it wants?

Judith Lorber asks us "If we remove the structural underpinnings of marriage and the family ... what structural arrangements can be devised to ensure the stable socialisation of children". (The Family, Co-ordinator, 1975). Jessie Barnard claims "motherhood as we have institutionalized it is not good for children ... the anger and irritability it fosters in women reverberates on the children ... when one fully realises her frustration one is frightened at the thought that defenceless infants are abandoned to her care ... It is no less serious because most women have the morality and decency to repress their spontaneous impulses" (Bernard, J. 1974). In similar vein Mia Kellmer Pringle reminds us that "we so over-value the child's ties with his natural family that we allow him to remain with disturbed or rejecting parents". (National Children's Bureau, 1972). These writers raise for us this question.

Q. Are parents always able to respond in ways that meet the needs of children?

Jessie Bernard says she finds "today's young mothers, who spend a high proportion of their time caring for children, telling us they find joy in their children but they do not like motherhood" (Bernard J., 1974). This raises the following question.

Q. Why are the expectations of some parents not fulfilled when they occupy the parenting role?

When we read "... mothers are held responsible for juvenile deliquency, problem children, neurotic children, vandalism ... and the many woes of society" (Bernard J., 1974) we might well ask -

Q. Why does society have such a poor view of the mother and why is it that some mothers appear to be unable to meet the standards that society demands of them in their parenting performance?

As a sociologist how would I attempt to understand the social forces that might be contributing to the apparent disharmony between children's needs, parents expectations and society's demands?

First, I would want to introduce the concept of a stereotype.

Second, I would want to describe the basic assumptions on which the stereotype of family life, in our society, has been constructed.

Third, I would want to explore changes in family life in our society in the past three decades.

Fourth, I would want to suggest ways in which the stereotype has contributed to the creation of the disharmony we observe between children's needs, parents expectations, and society's demands.

1. What is a Stereotype?

All societies tend to consolidate the ways in which certain things are done, especially those things that are important to the maintenance of that society. The preferred, prescribed way of carrying out an activity becomes an institution, that is an established legal or customary practice. An image or idealisation of the preferred, prescribed pattern of behaviour emerges. This image, or blueprint, is referred to as a stereotype and is well described in the following passage. A stereotype constitutes a set of "master ideas shared by individuals, within a society or culture, that are used by individuals to guide, judge, rationalize, perceive or interpret their own lives and the lives of others. (It) always selectively represents and often simultaneously misrepresents reality". (The Family Co-ordinator, 1975).

2. The Family Stereotype in our Society

A stereotype is not immutable. It does change, albeit slowly, over time. But it contains within itself inherent tendencies not to change as rapidly as change in a general sense takes place in a society. These forces that retard change in the stereotype will be examined in a later section of this paper. For the moment I want to outline the stereotype of the family in terms of the ideological tenets that underlie it in our type of society. I am mindful of the fact that the undiluted description of the stereotype characteristics outlined below is not necessarily a totally accurate representation of the current family stereotype. For as noted above, stereotypes do change in their constitution. These characteristics are however an accurate representation of the beliefs, theories, assumptions and implications that, over time, have provided the bases upon which the stereotype of the family has been built in our society.

(i) A family is a private social unit, autonomous in its internal arrangements and free from public scrutiny. Beginning in the fifteenth century as a form of protective privacy against communal festivities it later became a protective device against the evils of industralization and urbanization. Idealized thus the home became a "sacred place, a secular temple, an isolated walled garden which has served to keep mothers and children in as well as the world out". (Bernard, J., 1974). Such an image of family life has reinforced the belief that child socialization in the early years is the responsbility and task of parents.

(ii) A mother is essentially the person who should rear the children for the bond between herself and her children is biologically determined. Further, a mother and her children have complementary needs. This has led to mothering being equated with parenting and it has reinforced the belief "that even a bad mother is better than a good substitute" claims Jessie Bernard. (Bernard J., 1975).

(iii) Mothering requires total dedication and such dedication is exhibited by being on duty twentyfour hours per day.

Elizabeth Newson reported a Nottingham mother who expressed the sentiment, with some bitterness, this way. I say to my husband "you get your coat and you're off on your own, but if I get my coat, there's five of us going!" (National Children's Bureau, 1972).

(iv) A family is child focused, i.e. the needs of the children take precedence over the needs of other people in the family.

(v) Mothering is a skill that is largely biologically determined and to the extent that if it requires to be learned this is done by observing mothering during one's own childhood or it is learned on the job!

(vi) The role of the father is largely defined in terms of economic and emotional support of the mother.

(vii) The family is nuclear in composition and small in size.

(viii) The rewards of parenting outweigh, or balance the sacrifices of parenting.

(ix) The marital relationships which form the base of the family is permanent and monogomous.

(x) Division of tasks follow traditional sex-role beliefs held in our society.

These, it is claimed, constitute the tenets upon which our family stereotype has been established. (For a more comprehensive account see Rapoport R. & Rapoport, R., 1977).

3. Social Change in our Society

During the last two decades we have observed changes taking place in our type of society at what seems an ever-accelerating rate. Social change has many dimensions, simultaneously new values and ways replace the old, re-ordering of value-priorities takes place and sub-groups in society demonstrate or experiment with new ways of doing things. The outcome is that major institutes in society change their structural composition, relationships, style and even their function.

Change has been rapid indeed in the institute called the family. New societal values, or a re-ordering of values that appear to be contributing directly to the changes we are observing in family life are multiple. A change in educational values whereby girls, as well as boys, are prepared for occupational roles; an increasing demand for gender-equality; an increasing value placed upon self-actualization and independent behaviour; a belief that personal growth requires intimacy in a variety of inter-personal relationships; an increase in the rate of spatial mobility; an ever-increasing pre-occupation with pecuniary worth. These are some of the value changes which sociologists believe underlie the new forms of family life that are emerging. To illustrate this claim Edwards, for example, argues that materialistic values are fundamentally incongruous with the values of traditional family life. He believes that our economic system requires a what-can-I-derive orientation whilst our family system requires a what-can-I-contribute orientation. (See Edwards, J. 6,1974). Where the former orientation prevails traditional family structures will be in confusion which may lead to decline. Those with a commitment to goals of economic independence, role-equality and person-to-person relationships are also likely to find the traditional nuclear family inappropriate and restrictive. It is in their relationship to the value changes discussed above that we comprehend the variant forms of family life that are emerging - the single parent family, the dual-worker family, the communal family and the reconstituted family. All of these are alternative family organisations in which individuals are attempting to widen their opportunities to pursue life-styles congruent with the beliefs they hold. (For detailed accounts of variant families see The Family Co-ordinator, 1975 and Rapoport R. & Raporport R., 1977).

I have referred earlier in this paper to the fact that the stereotype of family life has not remained static. Change has been ascernible. The role of the mother is less idealised; the needs of parents, as people, have gained more recognition, the unreality of total sacrifice is acknowledged, the gains of shared parenting are acknowledged and often observed in practice. But, the rate at which family life, as it is lived in our society, has changed far exceeds the rate at which the idealised image of family life, in our society, has changed. We are fast approaching the time where one half of our families live in a style and/or structure which is at variance with the stereotype. This lack of congruence, I believe, lies at the heart of the contemporary predicaments which surround the family.

4. Dysfunctions of the Stereotype

Inthis section I wish to raise four propositions.

When the stereotype becomes too removed from the reality it can no longer serve its prime function as a model and guide.

That the existence of a stereotype reinforces the stigmatization of alternative modes of family life.

That the existence of a family stereotype places blinders on those who seek to understand childhood.

That the assumptions upon which the stereotype is built have a tendency to become taken-for-granted knowledge and then serve to inhibit on-going investigation.

A. Stereotype as a Model

It is evident that we have reached a hiatus situation. The traditional nuclear family stereotype is increasingly unable to fulfil its function as a guide for family living to the growing number of adults who reject the values upon which it is based. Yet new models have not developed to the point where they can serve as alternative reference points.

This, then, is a time when an ever-increasing proportion of families in our society are attempting to create new styles of living unaided by guidelines. For many caught between the old norms and the new styles the co-existence of contradiction constitutes undue strain and guilt. Lyn Richards summarizes it in this way - "for women who are confused it would be a considerable help if the inevitability of confusion in this situation of changing norms were publicly recognized. If one thing is emphasized by the accounts people give it is the urgent need for honesty in public statements about Mothers - their experiences, their duties, their needs, and the fact that many of them now are confused about who they are". (Richards, L., 1978).

It is equally apparent that many whose occupations place them in the role of adviser to parents - e.g. doctors, lawyers, teachers, social workers and journalists are experiencing incongruity between their orientation to the old stereotype and their recognition that it is losing its function as a model. There is urgent need for new models of family life and parenting to emerge and to be congruent with the contemporary social and cultural context.

B. Stigmatization of Alternative Life Styles

In idealizing one style of family life there is a tendency for other styles to be denigrated without firm foundation. Variant families are not necessarily either deviant or irresponsible. Too little first hand knowledge is available to make this claim. But they do suffer from being regarded as different or as being problems. For example, such attitudes may be the source of the main disadvantages encountered by children in one-parent families, the Royal Commission on Human Relationships has recently claimed. (Royal Commission on Human Relationships, Final Report, Vol. 4,1977).

C. The Stereotype as Blinder

It can do this in many ways. For example, it may become the focus for research. Sometimes in fact it is suggested that simply because it is the stereotype the traditionally structured nuclear family has received the overwhelming attention of researchers and this has been to the detriment of a growth in our knowledge of alternative family styles. Certainly it is true that we know very little of life as it is lived and experienced in the variant family forms mentioned above. Rapoport & Rapoport raise this issue when they remind us that "very little professional attention has been paid to (the reconstituted family), even though it has fascinated story-tellers, gossips and dramatists since antiquity". (Rapoport R. & Rapoport, R., 1977).

It is important that the stereotypes that describe life in variant family stuctures are based upon serious study and not merely hearsay. For these will become the family guidelines for an increasing proportion of families in our society.

A stereotype may act as a blinder in that the stereotype becomes assumed. I believe that to some extent this has happened in so far as research has tended to focus upon childhood from the developmental perspective without paying due attention to the socio-cultural contexts in which childhood is experienced. Thus a view of childhood as a social experience is under-represented in the literature on children.

D. Assumptions Underlying the Stereotype become taken-for-granted knowledge.

Assumptions and beliefs upon which stereotypes are built are diverse in origin. Some have their foundation in scientific formulations and empirical research (see Rapoport, R. & Rapoport R., 1977 for a comprehensive exploration of this view). Some of them have their origins in folk-lore and yet others in undiluted myth. Be this as it may, these assumptions and beliefs which underpin a stereotype have a tendency to become the conventional wisdom, i.e. unquestioned, even long after it has become apparent that they are indeed questionable. Our understanding of childhood and family life, and our ability to contribute professionally to social action, would be better served by the assumptions and beliefs that underlie models of family life being viewed as problematical. I would like to illustrate this by exploring two assumptions upon which the traditional family stereotype has been based. First the assumption that mothering involves a twentyfour hour commitment; second the assumption that the skills of parenting are natural or can be acquired informally.

(i) Mothering Involves Sole Responsibility and Twentyfour Hour Commitment

By taking this tenet, or something similar to it, largely for granted, our society has long delayed an investigation of the relationship between the quality of maternal care and the time spent on mothering. Jessie Bernard (1974) reminds us that anthropological studies have demonstrated a relationship between maternal warmth and life style. Both over-crowded and socially isolated households appear to be associated with a lack of maternal warmth whilst both regular relief from full-time child care and relief from other household tasks are factors associated with an increase in maternal warmth. Why, asks Jessie Bernard, have the possible incompatibilities of tender loving care, around the clock, and exclusive responsibility for the care of children not been explored? Why have we "staged the motherhood role in a way that makes it all but impossible for so many well meaning and conscientious women to perform it in an optimal manner". (Bernard J., 1974). For a contemporary Australian study that demonstrates the tension that this incompatibility creates for some mothers see Lyn Richards' Having Families. Only now are we beginning to realise the physical and psychological risk to children, and the socio/psychological risk to mothers that can accompany full-time child care in isolated social situations. Only now are we beginning to ask is it possible that by opening up the parenting process to larger social participation we might provide some safeguards against abuses of parenting and support for families?

By taking-for-granted that mothering involves sole and full-time care a corollary is reflected in community attitudes. Our community is not receptive to the notion that parents and community might, for the benefit of all, share some of the parenting tasks and responsibilities. Our community has become accustomed to believing that only families in special need should be relieved of some of their parental responsibilities. Exploration, at all levels of social action, of family and community sharing aspects of child care needs to be encouraged. For those interested in voluntary work being done in this area, I commend to your attention the interesting exploratory work of the Church of England Care Force.

How can we contribute to the creation of an environment in which the community would believe it normal to offer a range of tangible social support services for parents and children and in which the ways and means of sharing child socialization might then be explored as a serious question? The urgency to move toward this is compounded by our ignorance of the specific support needs of families living alternative life styles.

(ii) Parenting is natural or learned informally

By taking this assumption for granted rather than regarding it as problematical our community has long delayed asking one of the most important questions before our society today. How can we help women and men enjoy being parents and thus contribute to the provision of good parental care?

People come to parenthood by different paths and with different motivations. Some find the transition to the new role relatively easy, for others it can constitute a time of personal crisis and for many the role transition is achieved with a degree of difficulty that might well have been eased if role preparation had been somewhat different. Mia Kellmer Pringle sums it up in these simple words "appropriate preparation and education of tomorrow's parents could hasten the day when society really cares for the children it chooses to have". (National Children's Bureau, 1972).

Role preparation for parenting must be regarded with the same degree of importance as role preparation for skilled work roles. It should begin long before a person becomes irrevocably committed to the role. Viewed this way the initial stage in parent education would intend to give people the opportunity to decide whether or not they would prefer to undertake the parenting role. If people are to be given anticipatory socialization into the parenting role in order for them to make a free choice there is a crucial question that needs to be answered. At which point in the life cycle does a formal program of anticipatory socialization for the role of parent need to begin?

A parent education program relevant to young people in our society would have multiple aims. I believe that one of its aims would be to encourage the recognition of the fact that becoming a parent is an event with certain social consequences. To this end I believe the program would need to -

* become a compulsory unit in school curriculum as its initial stage

* recognize that parent-crafts are a necessary part of the program but that education for parenting is a much broader concept, extending well beyond the learning of these skills

* offer an opportunity for people to learn of the constraints of parenting as well as the rewards. Lyn Richards uses the words of one of her respondents to represent the many young parents who feel they are inadequately prepared for parenthood, "I think it was the most bitter thing I've ever felt about my friends that they couldn't let us know there were bad sides as well as good sides" (Richards, L., 1978)

* present a view of parenting which showed that good feelings and bad feelings are both typically experienced and explore the causes of these feelings

* explore the role of father. Specifically in terms of it being a primary and effective role rather than it being presented as a secondary supportive role

* explore parenting and childhood within all of the diverse family forms that we know in our society and not merely within the traditional nuclear structure

* present the parenting role as one that offers opportunities of continuing development for its occupant

* emphasize the interactive nature of the parent/child relationship

* explode the over-romanticized image of family life as presented by the media

* explore the complex and sensitive interaction between the marital relationship and the parental relationship

* recognize that continuing education is as vital to good parenting as it is to any other career.

Anticipatory socialization into the role of parent will not bring a full understanding of the nature of the role but it would ensure that fewer parents take up the role quite unprepared for the reality they are to confront.

What can we do to encourage our community to believe that resources need to be employed in the development and provision of parent education?

CONCLUSION

We all share a common goal, the creation of environments optimal to the developmental needs of our children. In this paper I have suggested that our attention should be focused on ways in which this can be achieved. Parents, and others, responsible for the socialization of children need guidelines. However, they will not be assisted by blueprints that are unrealistic and unattainable or by models that are out of touch with the social and cultural contexts within which child socialization takes place. Nor will they be assisted by guidelines that are based on taken-for-granted assumptions. Theories and beliefs that provide the bases for parental guidelines are best viewed as problematical. This serves the purpose both of providing a continued exploration of how children's needs can best be met by parents and society, and of ensuring that guidelines remain relatively congruent with changing social and cultural conditions.

In our society the majority of children will continue to have their first experiences of social reality within their family. I have suggested that early childhood socialization will be enhanced considerably when parents who choose that social role, are socially prepared for it, and experience community support in the form of the provision of services that meet specific needs.

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CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS IN A CHANGING SOCIETY - WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

III

- Howard Williams

It is now well known that children have certain basic needs which must be met if they are to grow normally and develop their maximum potential. These basic needs should be accepted as the rights of all children. They have been laid down in ten broad general principles in "The Declaration of the Rights of Children" by the United Nations Assembly in 1959. In proclaiming this Declaration, the Assembly also called upon parents, upon men and women as individuals and voluntary organizations, local authorities and national governments to recognize these rights and strive to implement them. Proclaiming rights without accepting the responsibilities incurred is a fairly meaningless and hollow exercise.

Why has progress in child health[1] and well-being in some Third World and Western countries been so slow? It is not due to lack of knowledge or the ways in which these principles may be implemented, but failure to make the needs and care of all children a top National priority, failure to integrate individual, community and professional resources in child care, and failure of parents, individuals, professionals, communities and governments to understand and devote themselves to the most important responsibility of all societies and nations.

I want to outline the major problems and differences affecting children's growth and development in both Third World and Western urbanized industrial countries and indicate some of the difficulties in dealing with them. Some of the needs of children will be of greater importance in some societies than in others. The hungry chronically sick child cannot learn, so must be fed, the lonely child cannot mature, so must be wanted and loved.

Third World Countries

In many Third World countries, the major problems are too many children and inadequate resources in food, shelter and hygiene. There are too few and inadequate services in primary health care. Illness and disease from hunger and malnutrition and uncontrolled infections are common and there is a very high mortality and morbidity rate in infants and young children. There are too few schools so that children grow up illiterate, often without hope or the dignity of work. These problems are similar to those which existed in western societies 100-200 years ago.

NOTE: 1. Health is used in the context of total well-being and not in a narrow medical context of the presence or absence of disease.

It is important to understand that these problems were gradually solved by slow improvement in the general economic state, development of agriculture and better nutrition of the whole community. Provision of clean water, safe disposal of sewerage and refuse and better shelter resulted in improved hygiene and health. Introduction of compulsory education with gradual abolition of illiteracy and improvement in working conditions were factors of equal importance.

How do these economically and industrially poorer countries solve their immense problems in meeting their children's needs?

It is important to understand how a great country like the Republic of China has made tremendous strides in improving the health, education and welfare of their children in a period of less than thirty years. She has done so by making children's welfare a top national priority, by improving agriculture and the distribution of food so that hunger and famine have been abolished, by providing simple and essential primary health care, especially for pregnant mothers and their children. Family planning to control excessive population growth has also been an essential measure. Education of all children and most adults has been a remarkable achievement. They have been able to implement these changes relatively rapidly by national planning of their economic and agricultural development and linking of these developments with their health and education systems. They have involved the entire population in these developments so that parents, individuals, communes and government have worked closely together with great purpose to improve their own lives and the health, education and well-being of their children. Some other countries have adopted similar principles with success.

However, other Third World countries have failed to understand these principles and have not established clear priorities for development or accepted that social changes are essential to implement these developments. As a result they are spending a disproportionate amount of their limited resources on the urban population and neglecting the rural section which comprises 80% or more of the people. It often happens that the scarce resources for health are allocated to expensive sophisticated western-style hospitals instead of primary health care units in villages, that elitist-type universities are established before simple rural schools, and that great administrative buildings and bureaucracies built while essential agricultural developments are neglected. As a result many millions of children die early, many of the survivors grow up in poor health and handicapped, many remain illiterate and do not have the dignity of work and often die early.

Western Ubanized Industrial Countries

During the twentieth century the causes and nature of disease and ill health have gradually changed. Malnutrition and infectious diseases no longer kill and maim many children, child birth is safe for mother and her infant, and many congenital malformations can be corrected by surgery. Most children grow up in good physical health, are educated and many have opportunities to develop their full potential. However, there are increasing problems of child abuse and neglect, of chronic handicapping disorders, mental retardation, educational failure, psychiatric disturbances and social maladjustment, and these present major difficulties in management and prevention. There are three main reasons why these problems are so common today.

(1) Breakdown of Families and of Child Rearing

There has been progressive isolation and fragmentation of families and communities due to urbanization, industrial and technological changes and movement of families from one area to another. Society is no longer cohesive. Values and standards in religion and morals, attitudes to marriage, divorce and sex and the woman's role in society and family have radically changed. Many parents have children without adequate preparation or understanding of the responsibilities and tasks involved and often have little or inadequate support in rearing their children. As a result the needs of these children are not met so that disturbances of growth and development occur. Child rearing instead of being a mutually satisfying and rewarding experience for parents and children becomes a complex and difficult task which seems unending and insoluble.

Just as the adverse physical environmental conditions in which families lived and children were reared were responsible for much malnutrition, infectious disease and death in the 18th and 19th centuries, so adverse psycho-social conditions in which many children are now reared are responsible for much ill health and disturbed growth and development.

(2) More Children with Chronic Disabilities

More children are now surviving and growing up with chronic disabilities. These disabilities are commonly the result of congenital defects, genetic abnormalities, disorders relating to pregnancy and childbirth and chronic or recurrent illness such as epilepsy and asthma. It is now estimated that one child in every seven has a handicapping disorder either physical, mental retardation, educational backwardness, psychiatric disturbance or social maladjustment or a combination of these. Children with these disorders require skilled parenting, community and professional support if their handicaps are to be minimized, and their full potential reached. Families with few resources and limited or no support are unable to cope, so that the child becomes further handicapped.

(3) Parents and the Public's lack of Knowledge and Acceptance of Responsibility in Child Health Education and Welfare

Parents and public now have high expectations for good health, education and welfare, both for themselves and their children.

They consider that these great benefits are automatically their rights, but at the same time, many do not consider that they have a major personal responsibility and commitment in helping to achieve these objectives. Health is considered to be a medical responsibility, education solely the task of the school, and social welfare the responsibility of the State.

Children simply do not grow up into healthy responsible and mature adults unless they are reared and nurtured in a stable secure warm stimulating home, school and community environment.

What are We to do about Meeting the Needs and Rights of Children?

The following five principles are of major importance in provision of optimum care in health, education and welfare. As societies and communities differ so there will be variations in the way these principles can be best implemented.

(i) National Planning but Local Responsibility

All governments should be committed to a long-term continuing national plan for child health education and welfare. These plans should be given top priority, have defined objectives and be properly supported financially. A National Children's Bureau or Commission with representatives of health, education, welfare and public is essential to act as a source of information, for research and advice to government, public and all concerned with the welfare of children. Those Western countries which have had such bodies have demonstrated their worth by improvements in children's health and welfare.

Implementation of these plans should be the responsibility of local government, councils or neighbourhoods so that the particular needs of the "local" families and children can be met by involvement of the community, parents and professionals so that independence and self reliance is encouraged. Centralised bureaucratic control will inevitably enforce a rigid pattern of control, be unable to adapt to variations in different communities and will stultify and minimize local commitment and involvement. "Let the government do it" philosophy will follow sooner or later.

(ii) Integration of Primary Health Education and Welfare Services

The aim should be an integrated child and family centred service so that all the skills and knowledge of those concerned with health, education and welfare of children and families can be readily available to all parents and to every child whatever his age or disability or wherever he lives. There is no place for professional elitism so that the child is seen only through the eyes of either the educationalist, the nurse, the doctor or social worker. The narrow professional who is often trained in an institution which does not have community and field commitment often believes that he has the knowledge and also the right to take sole care of the child in his particular discipline. He often does not understand that his role is primarily to encourage and help the parents to be more independent and responsible for their own child's development and care. His professional experise is mainly required for carrying out tasks which parents are unable to do as they have not had the necessary training.

(iii) Parent Education and Family Support in Child Rearing

The parental and family role should be to meet the developmental needs of children which vary with different ages. It is of the greatest importance that both parents are equally involved each in their own role, but also as co-partners in rearing their children. Those parents who have been reared in a loving, secure, stable and stimulating home are likely to have chosen a marriage partner from a similar background and so be able to provide a similar home for their children. It is not surprising that children who have been seriously deprived of good parenting, frequently have difficulty in making good parents themselves. It is these parents and children who especially need understanding, training and support to develop their parenting skills, self reliance and confidence.

This is a complex and difficult task for it involves not only changing community attitudes and responsiblities but also integrating the roles of parents, community and professional groups involved with children.

Probably the greatest challenge to western societies whose social fabric, culture and patterns of child rearing have so changed during this century will be to find ways of educating and supporting all families to provide adequate parenting and so meet the needs of their children.

(iv) Disadvantaged Families and Handicapped Children

Families and children disadvantaged by social isolation, by dependence, by ignorance, by poverty or chronic illness, or a combination of these circumstances, require special support if their children are to have their needs met, so that they may grow up with minimal handicap. Many of these families do not have the background, resources or education to provide appropriate parenting for their children. Often these parents are unable to use the existing services for a variety of reasons, so that these services must reach out to them. Parents who have grown up with these disadvantages and who lack initiative and self reliance often rear children in their own image. Each generation tends to reproduce itself. If this cycle is to be broken its most likely starting point will be the pregnant mother or mother with a young baby.

(v) Finally, all men and women and especially adolescents must learn, understand and accept that their greatest responsibility is the care of their children. If we want each generation of children to have a happy, satisfying and rewarding life, then we must nurture them through their long childhood to maturity.

The challenge to all nations and all people cannot be expressed more simply or more tellingly than in the poem of the Chilean Nobel Prize Winner, Gabriela Mistral:

"We are guilty of many errors and faults,
But our worst crime is abandoning the child.
Neglecting the fountain of Life.
Many of the things we need can wait.
The child cannot.
Right now is the time his bones are being formed,
His blood is being made,
And his senses are being developed.
To him we cannot say "Tomorrow"
His name is "Today"

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CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS IN A CHANGING SOCIETY - WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

IV

- Winston Rickards

This seminar deals with "The Realities of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child". In 1948 in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, men and women of all nations accepted certain basic obligations to children everywhere. What has happened since?

The concept of rights is so general particularly when based on the descriptive definition of the United Nations Organization Declaration. The concise Oxford dictionary gives twenty four definitions of the word 'right' each with its denotation and connotation. Such as "good or normal condition, sound, sane, satisfactory, well advised, not mistaken," or "again to make reparation for or to, avenge, vindicate, justify, rehabilitate." Perhaps more closely for my purpose, "justification, fair claim, being entitled to privilege or immunity, thing one is entitled to." The United Nations Organization Declaration of Rights is a credo based in love and concern for mankind.

Professor Victor L. Worsfold of Harvard University, indicates three features which are necessary in any scheme justifying Children's Rights.(1) The three characteristics are:- "They must be practicable", "They must be genuinely universal", "They must be of paramount importance". Rights are relative.

The concept of Rights may be difficult to define but if 'Rights' are expressed as needs then the spirit of the Declaration of the United Nations is embraced.

While there are undoubtedly universal practicabilities of paramount importance, throughout the world children and families in different societies and cultures have been exposed to change, some more rapidly than others.

The International Study Group of the International Association for Child Psychiatry and Allied Professions has been researching this area. In visits to Africa, India and Israel sweeping changes have been observed. Rights and responsibilities of children and parents must be viewed in the context of changing realities and values.

Professor Collomb in his paper, "The Black African Family"(2) has described vividly the changes in Senegal from tribal to urbanized life where factors such as modern technology, rapid communication and economic factors bring new challenges. Cultural stereotypes are thrown into the melting pot imposing stress on the participants and bewildering the professional observer.

Senator Walter F. Mondale(3) stated "During senate hearings and investigations on large scale social problems of hunger, education, health, poverty and migratory labour several points have become clear. First, as difficult as these problems are for all the people they affect - they almost always hit the children the hardest. When they strike during early childhood, the time of a child's greatest opportunity and greatest vulnerability, they may cause irreversible damage". He then points out a disturbing realization that while there have been significant investments in programmes of education, health care and nutrition for poor children, the ability to evaluate has been disappointing. Above all he states that "my work on children's programmes has convinced me that there is nothing more important for a child than a healthy family".

One fundamental philosophy that the family unit is the fulcrum of society and that all legislation should seek as far as possible to support and sustain basic relationships within that family. Another philosophy could consider that the child is an individual member of society with its own rights, and focuses, not so much on the blood-tie relationship, but on the responsibilities and duties of parents as caregivers to provide a stable and warm environment for children. I therefore propose to deal briefly with the rights, needs and demands of the individual child, his family and the state.

The Individual Child

Adolf Meyer described each child as "a unique experiment of nature". While Albert J. Solnit(4) at the Dakar conference in Senegal laid down criteria for healthy development which would transcend variations of cultural settings and expectations. Notwithstanding, it is necessary to see each child in his particular social and cultural setting. His development should be viewed in a dynamic perspective, "not permitting him to be labelled permanently by a single evaluation no matter how carefully done but rather to seek in today's child the pupil of tomorrow, the future adolescent and eventual adult." (Michel Manciaux)(5).

There has been an explosion of knowledge in the field of child development. The individuality of the child can be studied from the moment of birth if not before. Studies of neonatal behaviour bear witness to Brazelton's dictum "that the child shapes his environment". Thus there is far greater responsibility for professional workers to define vulnerabilities in each child, to assess the relevance of risk factors to which he is exposed and to estimate the quality of the child's competence to cope.

Now there is more awareness of the nature and meaning of developmental defects and deviations and individual differences and how they can affect the child's development as deficits or assets, and how they merge into the developmental process.

The number of children requiring professional understanding of their development is great - 20% of pre-school children will show developmental features requiring diagnosis, 15% of children will have a handicapping condition. Of more importance is their significance not only for the child himself, but also to his family and those around him.

As an example of change, the adoption of handicapped children or children with special problems now demands high skills in those who care for them. In this perspective, one must realize the importance of the impact of a child with special needs on his family and those around him, such as factors which can contribute to maltreatment, emotional and social difficulties in their families.

To be understood, he must be put together as a total child and not fragmented, labelled or stereotyped. Paramount is the understanding of the child's inner world and feelings for himself. The presence of developmental disability, be it clumsiness, or speech defect is important to study but it is more important to understand how the child feels about himself "how can I use and cope with myself to become happy and self-fulfilled". I am referring here to the relevance of the numerous types of developmental assessment which are carried out on children these days, often by professionals of widely varying backgrounds and training. These problems are compounded by the use of techniques which may not be culture free. "The child may look different depending on what question you ask - and how you try to answer it". The danger is that the child is assessed by a team, but to whom does he belong psychologically and who puts his parts together to realize the whole child.

The Family

Anthony Trollope talked of a certain Dr. Thorne - "Among the doctor's attributes not hitherto mentioned was an aptitude for the society of children. He delighted to talk to children and to play with them ... He argued that the principal duty which a parent owed to a child was to make him happy. Not only was the man to be made happy - the future man, if that might be possible - but the existing boy was to be treated with equal favour and his happiness, so said the doctor, was of much easier attainment".

If a child has the right to be happy, so do the parents and family. It is their function to nurture, care, educate, and provide the child with models for identification. All legislation then should seek as far as possible to support and sustain basic relationships within that family. The principles in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child apply by definition to the parents who are themselves still developing human beings with vulnerabilities and now in-built defences to cope with many risk situations.

One acknowledges that parents are adults with legal and social responsibilities but the nature of parenthood and parenting has special dimensions. Pregnancy is a crisis situation and parenthood itself an ongoing developmental task. Research is opening up areas of new understanding of the vicissitudes of parenthood and family process.

One must dissipate the stereotype of parenthood or parentism and look more precisely at the nature of the mother/child bond, the father/child bond and the growing family structure.

Just as the individual child is studied so too is his parent. The dialogue with the child which began in utero will continue throughout the child's life. Both partners begin a mutual interchange respecting each other's emerging personalities.

The late Donald Winnicott talked of "the good enough mother" and said how it was impossible to think of an infant without the mother, or indeed examine the child without the mother. Just as special skills are needed to understand the individuality of the child, so special skills are needed to understand the unique parent/child bond, of what this particular child means to this particular parent as this particular time. Just as the child is seen in a dynamic sequence so the unfolding parent/child relationship is seen as a developmental process.

A "good enough mother" recognizes the child's unique characteristics. Mothers with special problems of identification and other personality problems may need great help to read their child and understand his particular needs. In some, the problem of parenthood presents physical and psychological stresses needing special measures.

Our principles remain - the first need or right is to recognize the nature of the mother/child bond in every case. For example it is our experience with parents who maltreat their children that they have always sought help but it could be said that often they give the wrong message to the wrong person in the wrong way and at the wrong time. The ability to communicate pain, tension and suffering can be severely impaired and only understood if the meaning of the child to the parents is understood in the light of the parents' own development.

It is at such times of difficulty that special support systems of health family kinships are needed. When they fail then community and social resources are required. It should be noted that in an extensive experience of families in which maltreatment has occurred, how frequently help has not been available at times of crisis to the vulnerable mother or family. If it has been available the underlying nature of the distress has proved difficult to unfold and worked with therapeutically.

The compexity of the situation is seen in such situations where a vulnerable child may be a difficult burden to the average mother but on the other hand distressed sick or disturbed mothers need not necessarily have a damaging impact particularly on competent children. In fact, Anthony has referred to "The Invulnerable Child".(6) It is here that special skills are needed to understand how the child sees his mother, how she meets his needs and how secure he feels. The child's perception of the parent can differ so much from that of the adult observer. To the child the world outside the family becomes dangerous and persecuting.

The principles apply equally to both mother and father. Siblings mean much to the development of the particular individual child.

A more vigorous professional approach to the study of family functioning and family process has emerged. If this approach is carried on too vigorously there is the danger that the needs and rights of the individual child become submerged within the consideration of those of the family. It is true that the child can be the thermometer of the family tensions or the emissary of the respectable ticket for the family to seek help. This can be a dangerous over generalization. As McDermott states clearly that "Intra-psychic pathology is not always directly translated into inter-personal problems. The child may have problems which are not in actuality related to those of his parents and their marriage. Conversely marital problems do not necessarily always create disturbed children".(7) It is here that the Right of the Child to be understood as a unique individual has become in some areas of professional work a major concern. The diagnosis of the child is made in the child himself.

Skilled attention is required to understand and treat the disturbed child. He has as much right as his parents to be a patient and understood and treated as a patient.

It is common clinical experience to understand that each participant has a contribution but that they need not be directly related to each other. So often obvious violations like physical abuse, deprivation of life's necessities tend to overshadow these other so called violations of the Children's Rights which are not as dramatic. Matters such as decision-making within a family may respect, ignore or include the child's needs. At each stage of family decision-making the child needs his parents to act for him. In this, must be a sensitivity to his developmental immaturity, of how his feelings, thoughts and behaviour are all influenced by the task of individuating and separating from his parents.

The State

The state has a duty to enter this complex field. On the one hand the state in trying to preserve family relationships actually may unwittingly harm the child and its relationships with other adults.

On the other hand the state may judge parents too severely and interfere in the attempts by families in difficult situations to improve their relationships. We may indeed be threatening the very fabric of family life and undermine security and breed disruption.

These are the extreme poles. It is not either-or but it is a mattter of working with changing needs which can be helped most by the provision of the trained professionals and professional services which can initiate preventive measure within a receptive and sensitive community. Our dangers are very real when entering the complex field. Each of us are involved and respond personally despite professional training. Dr. Michel Soule states that "Everyone thinks himself objective in this matter but in fact people react emotionally be defending the children that they once were."(8)

Whatever is done, professionals can at times be advocates but must be informed advocates - communicating sensitively with child, family and each other. We should help parents to "treat your children as you wish them to treat your grandchildren".

The network of services built up should be practical, appropriate and of paramount importance. Over-zealous services must not strip away the rights of the child to privacy and confidentiality. The network of support services must be local, regional and meet the real needs of child and family. Goldstein, Freud and Solnit in their book,(9) "Beyond the Best Interests of the Child" state their decisions should provide the "least detrimental available alternative", an elegant concept and be made through a knowledge of the inner life of the developing child. Professionals should ask themselves "Are we really doing what we think we are?"

As Mondale pointed out when social problems are most difficult, they almost always hit children the hardest - "Nothing is too good for our children except money". If services for children are not developed or made available when needs and demands are expressed, justified discontent results with anger often projected on to parents who become the focus for the community's anger. Thus one can understand that when services do become available, despite much-needed community education programmes, vulnerable families remain unreachable.

We must review our own knowledge and understanding. If knowledge is not used to the best advantage it is not knowledge.

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PUBLIC POLICY AND THE CHILD

- Mable B. Anderson

This paper briefly describes public policies which affirm and promote the rights of children, identifies some concerns of child advocacy groups, and presents a review of the controversy between parents' rights and the rights of children in the United States of America.

The 1967 Report of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, together with growing concern about the effect of on-rushing tide of women's rights on marriage and the family, have stimulated concern for children and increased governmental support for new efforts for children's rights in the court, in the home, and in the schools.

In 1971, forty-three (43) per cent of the nation's mothers worked outside the home compared to eighteen (18) per cent in 1948. One out of every three mothers with pre-school children, about eight million were living in single-parent families. Some 350,000 children were in foster care in the United States. Teenage alcoholism and drug abuse remain growing problems. Suicide is still the second leading cause of death for youths between fifteen (15) and twenty-four (24) years of age. One out of every nine (9) children is expected to be involved with the Juvenile Court System by age eighteen (18). One million children and youth, mostly middle class Americans, run away from home each year. Child abuse has become a recognized problem in America. (Mondale, 1975).

In the United States, the proportion of teenagers who were mothers increased from twelve (12) per cent in 1950 to nearly twenty (20) per cent in 1973. Teenagers accounted for nearly one out of every five (5) live births in 1974. About 12,529 babies were born to girls under fifteen (15) years of age and 595,449 to young women aged fifteen (15) - nineteen (19). (Goldmeier, 1976).

PUBLIC POLICIES FOR CHILDREN

Legal and constitutional rights of children have been expanded in recent years. The protections offered under the Fourteenth Amendment apply to minors. The Fourteenth Amendment and the Bill of Rights in the United States are not for adults alone.

The Rights of Children in Court

"Legal rights may be thought of as those needs and interests which society agrees may be met by compelling action on the part ofothers by action of the persons more or less free from the influence of others." (Galbraith, 1975).

The term "children" is sometimes a term of legal classification. For example, the term has been used to denote the right to drive a motor vehicle, the right to vote, the right to work, the right to drop out of school, the right to marry, the right to certain procedural protections in juvenile courts, the right to refuse to salute the flag in public schools, the right to wear a black armband to protest the Vietnam War. Chronological age and ability differences continue as a mark of legal distinctions in attempting to describe the term "children". In the United States, the 26th Amendment provides a reduction of the age of majority to eighteen (18), although some rights and privileges remain fixed at twenty-one (21).

A child is presumed incapable of the intent to commit a crime or a negligent act before age seven (7). At age seventeen (17), the juvenile becomes an adult for purposes of criminal court jurisdiction. The adult accused of crime is liable to punishment, whereas, the minor is only subject to civil procedure under which he would be treated or rehabilitated. But these procedures, have at times, been used to incarcerate minors for offences that would not be crimes if adults were involved. Two (2) major cases have focused on the child's rights under the United States Constitution. In re Gault, 387, U. S. 1, 13, 1967, the court explained that the child does possess rights under the Constitution to bail and to a public trial. The rights of a minor to a jury trial were delineated in the McKeiver vs. Pennsylvania, 403 U. S. 528, 1971. The courts found that such a right was not applicable to the minor in the adjudicative stage of the juvenile justice system. The rationale was that the lack of a jury did not prevent a fair trial. The decision was based on the difference in the nature and theory behind the juvenile detention hearing. Juvenile Courts, inspired by the desire to reform misbehaving children rather than to punish them, are established in every state in America. (Paulsen, 1974; Raitt, 1975, Galbraith, 1975). However, these benign intentions are now more clostly scrutinized.

The Rights of Children to Privacy and Medical Treatment

In W. Prosser, Handbook of the Law of Torts, 35, 1971 edition, it is stated that under the common law rule, a physician treating a child without the consent of the child's parents or legal guardian normally will be liable for at least a technical battery.

"The unconsented touching of one person by another constitutes a battery for which damages may be recovered." (Raitt, 1975). For most medical treatments, a physician will be liable for battery if he or she treats a patient without first obtaining the patient's consent.

The technical battery liability is associated with the treatment of the child without parent or legal guardian consent.

Many states have lowered the age of majority below twenty-one (21), others have stipulations related to emancipated and married minors, while a number of states allow a minor to consent to diagnosis, prevention or treatment of pregnancy, as well as diagnosis and treatment of venereal disease.

In the State vs. Koome, the Washington Court had before it a physician appealing his conviction for performing an abortion on an unmarried sixteen (16) year old women, a ward of the King County Juvenile Court, which had given its consent to the abortion.

The young woman's parents and the Catholic Children's Services, the girl's temporary guardian, both opposed the abortion and were granted a stay of abortion order pending review of the State Supreme Court. During the stay, Dr. Koome performed the abortion. The Koome case showed awareness of physical, psychological, and social problems that were exacerbated by restrictive abortion laws and that the teenager's pregnancy and childbirth are especially risky at nearly all stages, for both mother and child. If the unmarried teenage mother and her child do survive the birth physically intact, often the mother drops out of school and neglect and child abuse occur. The Koome case has stricken the state's consent statute. This case demonstrated that carefully drafted legislation can enable juvenile courts to intervene when parents capriciously refuse consent to a pregnant minor in serious physical need of an abortion. (State vs. Koome, 1975).

The Rights of Children in Education

School Desegregation: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 addressed itself to discrimination against race, color, and national origin, and was intended basically for the recipients of federal financial assistance in all public elementary and secondary schools, most public and private colleges and universities, and many other agencies amounting to about 70,000 recipients.

One of the first specific children's rights precedents in the area of education was Brown vs. Board of Education, 347 U. S. 483, 1954. In the Brown case, the court held that the Constitutional rights of black school children were being violated by segregated education and emphasized the critical need of education both to children and to the general public. Brown's regard for rights in education and persistence in obtaining those rights with affirmative action mark it as significant for children.

Other federal legislation used to enforce "equal educational opportunity" for students enrolled in schools are Title IX of the Education Act of 1972, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. Major education legislation such as the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965 and the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) include guidelines against tracking and ability grouping when either race, sex, religion, or national origin is the associated factor.

The National Education Opportunities Act of 1975, H. R. 10146, states in its policy that every citizen is entitled to an education to meet his or her full potential without discriminatory barriers to success. (Taylor et al, 1966; Brown, 1976; H. R. 10146, 1975; Bennett, 1977).

School Age Parents

The court has ordered schools to re-admit girls who are pregnant and also school-age parents, with the implementation of the Regulations issued under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, "Nondiscrimination on Basis of Sex". The children and teenagers are entitled to complete their education with full access to the resources and facilities provided by the public school system. The House of Representatives H. R. 15414 Bill, 1976 enacted the National School-Age Mother and Child Health Act with an authorization of $30,000,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1978. It provides for state grants, outlines the procedures state governments must follow in order to be eligible, and delineates the services state agencies must provide. Among the service provisions are: confidentiality assurances, comprehensive health care, family planning services, comprehensive counselling, and training in child abuse and neglect.

The needs of young pregnant women and school-age parents are acute. They suffer more frequently from toxaemia, anaemia, infection and difficult labour. (Goldmeier, 1976).

Student Suspensions

Suspension from school, like other punitive actions of the particular state, raises basic political questions in a free society. Can the rights of students be subordinated to an official view for the common good? What is the goal: classroom tranquility or jeopardy of a child's right to education? In America, grounds for suspensions vary from state to state and often from school district to school district. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the courts have recognized that suspension is an extreme measure that undermines the basic aim of a school system which is the education of students. Thus, it is felt that suspensions should only be used as a last resort or only in emergency situations when there is no other alternative. (Cover Story, 1975).

Handicapped Children

Education for handicapped children is no longer charity - it is a right! This change came about by court action in 1971 when a group of parents of mentally retarded children went to court claiming that their children were not receiving an equal education and that this violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court supported the parents and contended that the state must provide for all of its citizens.

The Elementary and Secondary Act, Title VI, Part C, Sec. 623, authorizes grants to provide for experimental pre-school and early education programmes for handicapped children including activities to facilitate intellectual, emotional, physical, mental, social and language development. (Weintraub, 1976; Selected Federal Programs, 1976).

Bilingual Education

Policies which enable speakers and writers of non-English language as well as "non-standard" dialetcs to cope with the mainstream culture and economy have been identified.

The Civil Rights Act, Title VI, takes its basic power from the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution which prohibits the denial of equal protection under the law. In the Lau vs. Nichols case, the Supreme Court was asked to decide whether or not Chinese-speaking children in San Francisco School District had a right to special instruction because the children were clearly not going to profit from regular instructions. The law, at this time, is that there is an obligation and responsibility on the part of local school districts to identify children who may be denied equal education opportunity because of language incompatability and to remedy the problem.

The right of students to the language of their nurture or "a non-standard dialect" has raised significant concern. "The first substantial basis for the claimed right of students to their own language is provided by the First Amendment's protection of free exercise of speech" (Freeman, 1975). The Supreme Court's decision in Tinker and Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District, was a "free speech" case. In its decision, the Court held that the First Amendment right is protection for students even in the context of the schools. (Gerry, 1976, Freeman, 1975; Selected Federal Programs, 1976).

CONCERNS OF CHILD ADVOCACY GROUPS

In the United States, children have been traditionally subject to absolute control by their parents and have been a part of a small, relatively isolated nuclear family. The State has intervened in regards to compulsory schooling and child labour laws. The State also stands ready to intervene and remove the child from its biological parents if they neglect, abuse, or cannot control the child. The State has the right to decide between parents when they clash over child custody.

The White House Conference on Children in a Democracy speaks to all people for all the children.

In the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the perceived Rights are clearly identified.

There are special groups which lobby for the rights of children and become identified as Child Advocates who seek to obtain legal assurance through laws, bills, acts and through financial assistance for the implementation of these rights.

McGowan (1973) made case studies of some seventy (70) programs and identified a total of one hundred sixteen (116) child advocacy programs.

The need for an advocacy organization like Action for Children's Television (ACT) became evident by late 1960. Television reaches more than ninety-seven (97) per cent of all American homes, often without realizing the very real impact it has on children. In 1960, broadcasters could present sixteen (16) commercial minutes during every hour of children's programming. Through pressure brought on the broadcasting and advertising industries by ACT, with petitions to federal regulatory agencies and subsequent national publicity, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) voluntarily amended its code to cut the amount of advertising on weekend children's programs to nine and one half (9½) minutes per hour by 1976. A petition submitted by ACT to the Federal Trade Commission to prohibit all food advertising on children's programs was denied recently. The question raised by ACT was, "How does the television industry protect the right of children to grow up healthy when cereals with forty (40) per cent sucrose appear on eighty-four (84) per cent of all breakfast food ads? The concern remains. (Harmony, 1975).

The federal government has become involved in elements of children's television. The U. S. Office of Education has provided support for both television facilities and programming and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It is difficult for educators to avoid getting involved in controversies regarding the effects of television viewing. Parents may direct criticism to the school which educators feel would be more appropriately directed to parents. Federally funded programming for commercial television is the exception rather than the rule. The funded programs are aired usually on public television. (Mielke, 1977).

Dr. Blandina Cardenas, Commissioner of the newly formed Administration for Children, Youth and Families in the United States, perceives Secretary Califano and Assistant Secretary Martinez as strong advocates for health, education and social services priorities for children. (Cardenas and Haberkorn, 1978).

Peter B. Edelman (1973) presents tactics and ways to go about trying to change public policy as it affects children. He discusses how the Massachusetts Task force became a successful and powerful advocacy for children.

Historically, in the United States, professional organizations have introduced and examined public policies which relate to children. Brooks and Coombs (1975) stress the importance of interorganization strength as advocates. They challenge guidance organizations to become "true advocates for children's rights".

THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN PARENTS' RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Concern for children begins before birth. The development of children's rights movements and public policies to protect and provide essential care for children is not new. At the present time, however, there seems to be a controversy regarding the status of the child in the family. The controversy appears to be between "Family Autonomy" and "Children's Autonomy".

A fundamental reason given for the emergence of Children's Autonomy in the family and for the right of the state to intervene on behalf of children is the erosion in confidence that the family can realiably meet the needs of its children. Some people point to the increased number of single-parent families and the increased dependency of parents and children on external resources for financial, psychological, and sociological needs. Many people are concerned about the escalation of incidence of child abuse, parents absence when children need emergency medical care, increased incidence of suicides, alcoholism, and drug abuse among parents and children.

There is a growing concern over the high divorce rate and labor mobility in the United States. Children are becoming parents without the physical and psychological maturity needed to perform the role of parenthood. The question in favour of increased Child Autonomy seems to be "What is the present function of the family?"

There are views which strongly encourage "family autonomy". A major concern is the extent to which the authority of the State has intervened in the life of the family. Some believe that such intervention should be permitted only when the following conditions exist: (1) the intervention would clearly remove the child from serious harm; (2) the intervention would show facts of benefiting the child; (3) when intervention occurs, it ensures that parents and children will be kept together, if at all possible; (4) and it ensures that all decision makers are held accountable for their action.

A proposal has been made to provide legislation which will create a Commission on Families and Children. The major function of the Commission would be to issue "family impact statements".

The pressures that families experience and the resulting effects on children are being realized at the local, state, and national level. Experts are exploring the economic policies, rising unemployment, and the inflation that now torture families of low and moderate income.

As countries and nations enter the new era in history, the following questions should be considered: What will be the priorities for children? Is there a need to extend more adult rights to children? What are the current needs and interests of children? How can world forces unite to make the most rational interpretations and accept accountability for public policies for children in producing adjusted, happy and effective adults?

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

- L. F. Claydon

1.

In the preface to the publication entitled 'The Rights of Children' the editors comment as follows:

> *A need and a right may refer to the same phenomenon ... but a need connotes dependency and it is not clear whose responsibility it is to correct the situation ... A right on the other hand implies equality ... If a right is abridged, this is an injustice which the institutions of the state must correct. Thus if reading is treated as a need, widespread inability to read is a problem which may or may not merit society's benevolent concern. But if reading is a right, then schools must protect each child's ability to fulfill that right and the society's responsibility is unambiguous.*[1]

The editors go on to remark that when equal stature under the law is denied to a minority group then freedoms are ignored and needs unrepresented. A little later still they regret that the range of topics in this publication of nearly four hundred pages did not include a cross cultural perspective. One can only echo that regret.

That a need and a right may both concern the same phenomenon is, in fact, of considerable importance when discussing children's rights in that missing context of cultural diversity. The particular rights I will later identify are generally represented as needs, particularly in courses on child development for intending teachers of young children. That being the case their treatment is very much as the Harvard editors describe the treatment of reading when taken as a need, not a right. Schools may evince benevolent concern where there are lacks. One can understand the child better if one has that information. So far, so good: that's as far as we go. Study is therefore to do with why the thing in question is a need, how it is normally satisfied, and the effects both when it is and is not met.

Perhaps the paradigm instance of a child's need is that for love and a secure family life. This is precisely the area which I hope to show must be taken to involve rights rather than needs in the context of cultural diversity. I will take the whys, hows and to what effect statements just mentioned as given, adding only the uncontroversial contention that, where these things as needs go unmet, then disadvantage and even damage is the consequence. Taken as rights, however, these same phenomena deserve further discussion and from a rather different, possibly alarming, perspective. I intend to examine the way in which social institutions, particularly the school, may abrogate the right to family coherence and affection where there is cultural diversity. I wish also to look at the results which ensue, both for the family and the individual child.

I note here a certain tendency in the Harvard publication which would not have served well had there been the cross-cultural dimension they observed to be missing in their publication. It is to separate and even oppose adult and child in respect of the latter's rights. I am not at all sure that this will do as a general rule but, I have just said, I am even less sure when it comes to the subject of this paper. My reasons are as follows:

(1) In our society I believe it to be the case that the irreducible unit of educational significance is the family rather than the atomistic individual. I advance this as a statement of fact, not as an article of faith. Neither approving nor disapproving I would say that if that changes so will our society.

(2) Consonant with the first point and with our concern with rights rather than needs, one phenomenon we shall encounter will be intra-family alienation. This involves adults and children, not just one or other of them.

In my opinion, and especially in the culturally diverse situation, the school has a role in upholding the family's security, harmony and social self respect. To substantiate that point I want to refer to some work carried out by one of the teams of teachers associated with our project 'Educational Task Force'. It is described in rather more detail in a book called 'The Urban School'.[2]

Part of the work of the team concerned was to assess the degree of agreement and disagreement between teacher, students and parents on a range of educational issues regarded as important by all three groups. The issues included attitudes and values regarding authority, the suitability of various teaching methods, curriculum content, co-education, and the school's role in settling standards of behaviour for pupils outside school. We regarded agreement to be indicative of cultural consonance or harmony, and disagreement to indicate cultural dissonance or conflict. Once the patterns of consonance and dissonance are revealed we can make a fairly realistic assessment of the way in which the two worlds of home and school relate to each other.

In this instance we discovered a tendency for students and teachers to evidence consonance (agreement), and for parents to evidence dissonance with both other groups. Let us now explore the dynamic thus revealed. To do so I will refer to a different case concerning a primary school and the matter of food at lunch time. The events I will now describe happened at about the time that the team of teachers just mentioned was also at work on consonance/dissonance. The primary school concerned had the same context of cultural diversity, that is to say that some seventy percent of its student population were of non Anglo-saxon origin. In that number were to be found strong representations of some five quite different ethnic groupings.

The critical issue in this case revolved about the propriety of allowing parents from these groups access to the school playground at lunch time. It had frequently been explained to the parents concerned - explained in English of course - that their children could either bring lunch boxes or they could buy food at the school's thriving tuck shop, which sold pies and sauce, rolls, chico rolls and so forth, as well as chocolate and sweets of various kinds. Still the parents persisted in turn up at lunch time to sit with their children and share with them various, sometimes strong or strange smelling, things they had brought along to eat. Furthermore an occasional father would turn up and supervise a game of soccer for a group of the boys. Some Australian children had been observed to join in.

The situation gradually became more problematical. It was noticed that some of the Australian born Anglo-Saxon children were beginning to taunt the children of mediterranean and middle eastern origin. Fewer and fewer Anglo-Saxon children joined in the little soccer practices. Instead they stood about with others and shouted jokes about 'wogball'. An increasing incidence of such happenings eventually provoked a principal's reprimand at an assembly. But, in the staffroom, teachers asked what else could be expected when parents insisted on lunch time intrusions.

A growing element of parent-child conflict now evidenced itself within the immigrant groups. Mothers were discovered searching the classrooms for missing - i.e. hiding - sons and daughters. The latter were now seen to sometimes outright refuse to eat what had been brought for their lunch. At the end of the lunch hour it became less and less unusual for troubled and anxious parents to leave the playground while troubled and angry children went to their classes.

Finally the school decided that parents were to be barred from entering the playground during lunch time. It was so decreed, first during an assembly and then by letter - in English - sent to the parents via the children.

It is an interesting exercise to speculate as to just what went on so far as that letter is concerned. What, for example, would Johnny Smith say to his mother when she asked why the Principal was writing to parents about doing something that she had never thought of doing? And did Guiseppe Agrollo actually give his copy to his parents? If not, why not?

Whatever conclusions one may reach on these problems the fact is that the decree had a quite extraordinary effect. No parent now entered the playground at lunch time. Instead a line of them stood on the pavement on one side of the school railings and fed a line of children on the other side. Anxious, resentful parents; nervous resentful children. The taunting and ridicule now flared into fights and other blameworthy behaviour, occasioning more public reprimands from the Principal and more unease within the staff.

What we should take note of is that here is an instance of children caught in the middle. These were kids in no-man's land. On the one side is the school, the world of authority, and their peers: on the other side the world of home and their parents. And the kids were getting the worst of both. Not from any fault of theirs but because both sides made competing and conflicting claims upon them.

Whose fault then? In my view it cannot be escaped that the school is open to the severer criticism. For whatever reason, the school in this example was exerting its influence against the family. Even from the little I have described it is obvious enough that children of those non Anglo-Saxon groups, by operation of a hidden curriculum, were being moved to become ashamed of their parents. Now if we accept that the unit of educational significance is the family rather than the child in isolation, that is a very dangerous condition to encourage. (I will not dwell upon the difficulty of justifying it in terms of social ethics.) And the pretext for such action is to do with nothing that can sensibly be adjudged vicious or damaging to child or school. After all, if fragrant cheeses and pungent cooked meats are to be deplored then so are the disastrous levels of fats and sugars and artificial flavourings to be found in pies, pasties and candies. And if the parents are to be chided for 'intruding' in the playground then so is the school for providing no avenue for dialogue and compromise which could have done something about the problem other than turn the school playground into a variety of open prison.

I have chosen a relatively prosaic example. Some might even call it an uneducational one. My purpose has been to underline the fact that the institution of schooling inevitably touches people's lives in ways far more various than the scholastic attainments of children would reveal. Indeed, it is my opinion that talk of a 'purely educational question' is largely talk about a myopic misrecognition of the true nature of things.

This is the truer in respect of cultural diversity, the umbrella term we use to indicate that we deal, of necessity, with a range of basic social groups. As has been explained in some detail elsewhere[3], we use the term, basic social group, to refer to those groups which provide the developing individual with that base of values, beliefs, attitudes and approved ways of doing things which we call a life style. This adds up to the cultural identity from which a person gains his sense of belonging in his social environment. When institutions of the larger society belittle, affront or plain oppose particulars of such an identity they assault the whole base to personhood. And that assault is no less violent when it is launched upon the family through the child. Quite the opposite. Thus, when the parents find resistance to the family's dietary values arbitrarily imposed, they, themselves, are put under threat. There is something very frightening in a situation which appears to be taking the child away from the family's cultural anchorage. It looks as if the child has been recruited as an agent of destruction against that complicated set of beliefs, values and attitudes which have yielded the family's child rearing practices, food and rituals of eating, expectations and demands according to relationship, age and sex, the functions of parents, the duties of children, the importance of kinship ties, the place of neighbours, friends, club, church and workplace, everything that makes up what it is to have a home and a family and a community role. To set the child to attack all this is also an attack upon the unwitting child himself. Hence the persistence and the anxiety exhibited by the parents over all those lunch hours, culminating in the degradation of feeding their children through bars.

Let us now look at another aspect of this affair. Notes were sent home you will recall. I was at pains to point out they were in English. Now the medium by which cultural identity is preserved and transmitted is language. Thus language itself becomes an intimate and central characteristic of the person. When the language of the home is never used by the institutions of society at large, a new threat to cultural identity may well be present.

I hasten to remark that I do not suggest that the parent from a non-Anglo-Saxon background regrets his child is learning English. I have not yet found a parent who does not enthusiastically endorse the contention that competence in English is essential to the child. That is not the issue at all.

What threatens identity is a situation which denigrates language other than English. I have come across cases where children were forbidden to talk their first language in the playground and downright penalized for using it in class. Now that is to denigrate the language of the cultural identity. When we appear to suggest that the only proper mode of communication between home and school is by a medium different from the language of the home, we imply that Greek or Italian or Turkish or Siamese or whatever is inferior to English. Again, let me qualify; there may be perfectly good practical reasons for not communicating in Greek or Italian or whatever, however they will make sense if and only if they are jointly agreed by home and school.

Are there good reasons for such a restriction? One favourite contender from the past must be eliminated immediately. Yet it is a stubborn stayer. Why were those children forbidden to talk Italian, Greek, Turkish in the playground? Why were they admonished for working out things in class in the same languages? The assimilationist answer has been that these practices hinder progress in learning English. As Marta Rado's work at La Trobe strongly indicates, exactly the opposite is likely to be the case.[4] If we fail to maintain the first language we very likely slow progress in learning the second. Given this, then the prohibitions just mentioned are contributory to pedagogic inefficiency. Bilingual education is now shown to be socially just and educationally necessary, a happy juxtaposition which disarms the person who thinks that sound practice needs no theory. But even if this were not so I would argue that it would nevertheless be an abrogation of rights, and therefore educationally unacceptable, to ignore or denigrate the language of the home.

2.

The rights especially at risk in all this should now be restated. In my view they belong both to child and adult, son or daughter and parent. The practices we have been examining debilitate the entire family and, through the family, the total basic social group concerned. The result is not only educationally deplorable; it is socially malignant.

The rights concerned are as follows:

1. The right to an undamaged sense of belonging.
   This is significantly connected with cultural identity, with life style.
   The antithesis to this right is alienation.

2. The right to usefulness as a person. This is significantly connected with individual translations of values, beliefs and attitudes into behavioural adaptations to one's social environment.
   The antithesis to this right is rigid uniformity.

3. The right to competence in communication and self expression. All benign and compatible variations should be valued let alone permitted.
   The antithesis to this right is intolerance of language difference.

Much of the foregoing has taken the form of a critical analysis of certain practices. These practices feature the antitheses above cited. I might therefore be open to the charge that I have done no more than say what shouldn't happen.

In a sense that is true. But talk of rights generally occurs when rights are at risk, not when they are respected, pointed out and exercised. It is the denial of an alleged right which must excite attention in a just society. The preservation of rights and encouragement of their exercise also requires public discussion to be sure. Nevertheless, suppression, denial and disregard of rights are the progenitors of crisis and the seeds of democratic decay.

Secondly, I have been careful not to argue that schools must ape their neighbourhoods in all respects. I do not urge teachers to cringe before each and every demand for variation in curriculum and organization. Further to this, I do not deny that the rights of children can be overborne by parents as well as by teachers. In arguing that the family is the primary unit of education in our society I do not contest or blink these facts nor urge the school to do so.

Finally, I do not think that there is just one way of educating in a culturally diverse situation. There may well be many ways of honouring the rights that I have proposed. For this reason I have taken the line that our first awareness should be of the traps and malpractices that exist. Thus informed we are the better equipped to make a creative contribution to what is the best way to preserve those rights and to educate for cultural diversity.

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WORLD HUNGER AND THE CHILD

- Adrian Harris

The starving, emaciated child has become a well known symbol in rich countries to jolt consciences and raise money for overseas aid.

People from the third world, particularly the educated middle and upper classes, often express discomfort about their nation being presented this way. They claim it is negative and does nothing to portray the achievements and hard work being undertaken in poor countries to improve living conditions.

Also it is said by many development thinkers, that this emotive approach avoids confronting the rich world with the main causes of hunger and suffering.

In fact, we know that there are hundreds of millions of people in the world whose lives border on a state ranging from near-stavation to serious malnutrition. Statistics from the U.N. Population Bulletin estimate that the world has 300 million malnourished children.

I think it would be close to the truth to say that two thirds of the world's population live in a state of constant insecurity in relation to both their basic needs and opportunities. This probably includes 1,000 million children under the age of 15.

I would like to quote from an article by Myron Winick, Professor of Human Nutrition at Columbia University, New York:

> *"During the last 25 years numerous studies have demonstrated that early experience is related to later development. Rats reared in isolation exhibit permanent behavioural abnormalities. Children brought up in orphanages under similar conditions show behavioural and learning deficits. Malnutrition in both animals and children will permanently retard brain growth and will result in abnormalities in later development.*
>
> *It now seems that there is a 'critical' period during early development when the child is most susceptible to such 'environmental insults'. During this period poverty and its accompanying evils, hunger, sickness and lack of emotional stimulation, permanently stamp a child and may cause damage from which there is no recovery.*
>
> *This adds up to a vicious cycle: poverty leads to poor mental and physical development which in turn leads to school failure, poor work opportunities and continued poverty - and the cycle then begins again when children are born.*

> *So the poor remain poor partly because during their critical development period, malnutrition, poor health, and the other components of poverty have cheated them of the chance to fully develop their potential and extricate themselves from the cycle."*

The tragedy of these facts is not only that they exist, but more seriously that they appear to be accepted without any great sense of urgency or unsparing effort to overcome the problem and eradicate a level of suffering that is unprecedented in human history.

We have come to accept the glib words of politicians from all countries, expressing concern about poverty, while spending twenty times more money and effort on weapons and armies of destruction in pursuit of their particular national interest or ideology.

In reality, few of us want to come too close to the problem, be implicated in bringing about changes in the situation, which may mean changing our own attitudes and lifestyles, or really grapple with a scene that is far worse than the harassment of war, concentration camps or natural disasters.

In fact, it is often easier for the well-to-do to rationalize their inactivity by blaming the victims of poverty for their own situtation.

National boundaries are also a valuable excuse for avoiding the problem. It is easy for the rich of Australia to blame the rich of India for the inequities in the Indian society when we have shown limited intention of putting just principles into practice ourselves.

If we are to solve the problem of hunger and suffering for the child we must, as a world community, start tackling the root causes of poverty. While parents are living in poverty there is little prospect that their children can avoid being trapped in the same vicious circles. Thus, while the innocent, hunger stricken child is the most horrifying symbol of the inequity and callousness that plagues our planet, the solution lies in eradicating poverty for all people.

There have been attempts in past years to segregate children from poor families and communities with the belief that a better environment would help the child's development. Zealous and well-meaning missionaries, Government planners and social workers of the past have often indicated that the solutions to the problems of an under-privileged or supposedly backward group is to 'get them while they are young' so that the children will grow in a 'civilized' and organized institutional environment.

I find such a solution highly distasteful. It is loaded with cultural arrogance. It must drive a permanent rift between parents and children and fails to acknowledge the communal nature of poverty. Few children removed from their society for a long period will be willing to return to live in the conditions of their original community. Thus, whatever education or skills they have acquired will not be used to help the problems of their people, including children of the future.

In saying this I am not opposed to the organizing of creches, child-minding centres or education programmes specially related to children's needs. But if they are to be effective in helping the children and their parents they should be localized and involve the community as widely as possible.

However, the main gist of my argument is that if we are to be serious about the problem of hunger and poverty for hundreds of millions of children in the world, we as people, and governments of all nations, must come together to eliminate the root causes rather than ease our consciences by improving life for a few.

While it is a great virtue for people to be charitable, I think the time has come to recognize that far too often we hide behind charity to escape from facing the real problems of people.

At the World Food Congress in Rome in 1974 no-one denied that the world had enough food to support its present and even a considerably enlarged population. What has become clear is that if we are serious about overcoming hunger, which of course includes hunger of the child, new and more equitable forms of international distribution are required. We must realize we are dealing with a situation that is primarily political and economic.

As Dr. Ardeke Boerma, former Director of FAO, said several years ago, "The market playing freely will always feed the rich. You cannot expect the trade to arrive at a fair distribution of goods in the world. The trade is to make money".

Basically, this can be interpreted as saying that unless the distribution of food is restructured to ensure that all people receive their basic needs we will continue to witness major levels of suffering through hunger and malnutrition.

While some hunger is caused by lack of nutritional knowledge, dietary habits and taboos, the major cause of hunger is poverty. And as Mr. Radha Sinha, Senior Lecturer in Political Economy, points out in an article in the 'New Internationalist', it is the women and children who will suffer most.

Thus, there is an urgent need for new attitudes and actions by the rich of the world be they in affluent or poor nations, to make possible basic changes in the structures and mechanisms of food distribution and that of other resources and opportunities to overcome the primary causes of the problem of hunger which is poverty.

While we continue to allow major inequalities to exist in distribution or opportunity, charity and aid will have only a limited impact on the problem.

There are encouraging signs that the poor are no longer prepared to accept their situation with the apathy of the past.

There is a growing demand for a basic change in international and national economic structures.

This is best enunciated in the call for a new international economic order given strong impetus by a Declaration agreed to by almost all countries at the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 1974.

To date, concepts of what this means are still at the point of formulation and rhetoric, but understanding the urgent need for change is gathering momentum.

Still, it is the rich countries that have most reservations and offer a major stumbling block to working towards a new situation where overcoming human need is the major priority for the world's social economic and political activity.

At the same time, it must be recognized by the leadership and wealthy people of poor countries that if a NIEO is to have a prospect of success they too must accept changes in distribution and ensure development goals are aimed at meeting the needs of the poor.

To individuals it appears daunting when the issues are spoken of in global terms and is at this point that even concerned people want to drop the broad issue and concentrate their efforts on individual or identifiable support. How often do we hear "that's for the Governments or politicians, there's nothing we can do about that", or the suggestion that people involved in aid or charity shouldn't be involved in politics - even the politics of justice.

But to call for the development of a new economic order requires the willingness of both people and governments to accept the need for new and more just relationships between countries and within countries.

We in Australia are initially put to the test as individuals over our attitudes to aborigines, the most deprived section of our society. We know for example that infant mortality among aborigines in large areas of our country is among the highest in the world. We know that unemployment among aborigines is far higher than for the rest of the population. We know that the law deals far more harshly with aboriginal people than with the rest of the community.

It is also becoming encouragingly apparent that the aboriginal people are emerging from a period of benign acceptance of a position of hopelessness to evolve directions for their future and demand their rights.

This is after a period of almost fifty years where charity, hand-outs and state custody of aboriginal people had destroyed their traditions, their pride and their right to determine their own future.

The test within our own society, which wi[illegible] largely determine our attitudes to the world poverty problem, is whether we are prepared to support the re-emergence of the aboriginal people and give them the encouragement they need to develop themselves. If our own vested interests and commercial needs are always to have priority over aboriginal development these people, including their children, are doomed to continue to live in poverty.

Perhaps one of the most important areas where we must develop our understanding is the concept that development means becoming part of the modern consumer society that to many people in rich countries means the same as 'civilization'.

Our style of society sees virtues in competition as against co-operation, greed expressed in the status of material things regardless of the cost to other people.

This is unacceptable to many communities in developing countries of the world where their traditional life patterns have been based on co-operation.

This is not to say that great injustices and disparities did not exist, but for future development there is a strong base to build a just and more equitable society through co-operative activity, e.g. gotang royang, Shramadana.

Foreign contact with many of today's poor countries, particularly through colonialism, over the past century tended to destroy many community structures and values. The concept of 'civilizing' people to our standards has often only left them in a vacuum. We have destroyed both good and bad of their own values and mainly the worst aspects of our competitive attitudes and individualism have been adopted.

Education has been modelled on the academic models of a centralized, industrial society, frequently quite incompatible with the needs of development for rural communities, where most of the people of the third world live.

Health and medicine have been based on hospitalization, primarily curative rather than preventative, and very high cost usually only reaching the richest sections of society.

Bureaucracies have been centralized and continue the same traditions or arrogance adopted by colonials. Even the programmes of well meaning government aimed at eradicating poverty break down because of the distance, ignorance and arrogance of government officials who pay only lip-service to consulting with the people they are supposed to be assisting. Grand plans are drawn up in capital cities and thrust on people without their understanding or enthusiasm.

Aid does have an important role in development, providing it is given for the right motives and genuinely used to help the needs of people, particularly the poor.

However, there is a need for people in donor countries to be more questioning of the role our aid is playing and who it is really helping.

For government and non-government programmes alike it is vitally important that aid donors do not dictate the terms or nature of aid given to suit their own interests or priorities. What is thought good or successful in a rich industrialized society is not necessarily suitable for a nation which is basically rural based and labour intensive.

Aid and development are complicated issues and aid programmes should be developed in partnership with the people we are trying to assist. The vital ingredient so often missing in projects and programmes that set out to abolish poverty is the involvement of the people to be helped in decision-making and consultation.

Major projects are organized with little forethought for who will benefit. One example I can cite where a dam to be built in an Asian country was to increase food production and provide more employment for the people. However, once the water started flowing, only the richer farmers could take advantage of it. They immediately turned their land over to sugar cane production which required less labour than traditional crops, and meant that staple foods had to be imported on a cash basis. The poorest sections of society were hurt rather than helped and of course their women and children were hurt most.

In another instance I know of, the workers on a government tea estate were being given supplementary funding by a foreign aid organization because of the miserable conditions and pay they were receiving from their own government. Surely this was not a case for charity but for action by the government concerned, to ensure that people employed by it are given a reasonable and livable remuneration.

Thus, as we in the rich countries must be prepared to accept the need for changes in our attitudes to lifestyles and poverty, so too must people in positions of authority and wealth in developing countries. It is the attitudes of the wealthy over the next twenty years that will decide whether the war against poverty can be won. We can continue to demand that our privileged position be maintained at all costs and resist changes for more just and equitable distribution of resources or opportunity. If this is the direction we choose, conflict and violence will grow and the effects of poverty will increasingly impinge on all mankind.

The allternative is that we recognize the need for very basic changes in the nature of society, so that the excessive demands for wealth and material goods by the rich, twenty percent of humanity are reduced and resources and opportunity are distributed to meet the needs of all people in all countries.

This, of course, will not be easy, and certainly it is difficult to provide any ready-made answers as to how we bring about the necessary changes. But until we reach the point of understanding, basic changes are urgently needed, and that these changes involve rich as well as poor, our prospects of overcoming poverty and the appalling suffering of hundreds of millions of children are minimal.

If that point of understanding is reached then we have an opportunity to begin discussing rationally how and where changes can be introduced. At present, all of our institutions, social groupings, employer and employee organizations compete with each other to protect and enhance their positions. In this situation it is the poor who suffer, for despite their numerical advantage, they have little bargaining power to complete or stake their claim with government or non-government institutions in most societies, regardless of the political nature of these societies.

It is here that my own organization, Community Aid Abroad, has lent increasing weight in its aid programmes to supporting the organizing ability of the poor. To help their bargaining power in demanding rights that are often written into the constitution of their country but not implemented. (BRAC and AWARE programmes).

At present, there is some difficulty in finding support for such projects because they are about creating real changes in social structures.

It is also likely that such programmes will meet resistance from vested interests in their own countries who rely for example on cheap or bonded labour, make high profits from lending money to the poor when they are desperate, or regulate the food markets to buy when the price is low and sell when it is high.

However, I again stress that if we are sincere about overcoming poverty, such changes must be implemented.

Next year the United Nations has designated the Year of the Child. Hopefully, it will concentrate on the plight of children in poverty and force us to think about the real causes of their poverty - causes that will doom thousands of millions more children to hunger in the future unless they are changed.

However, if the Year of the Child only succeeds in arousing our pity and lifting charitable contributions for twelve months or so, it will do little to solve the problems of hunger and the child in the years ahead.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

- Gillian Parmenter

> *"At the age of one, a normal child, not impaired by hearing loss or speech impediment, will begin to say words. By one-and-a-half or two years, he will begin to form simple two- and three-word sentences. By the age of four years, he will have mastered very nearly the entire complex and abstract structure of ... language."*
>
> (McNeill, 1966)

> *"When a child acquires language, he finds out what it is used for and how it is used."*
>
> *"Language may be used to express feelings, thoughts and intentions toward others and toward oneself. Interpersonal communications may be used to express feelings, to control the behaviour of others, to maintain social contacts, to convey or receive an organized body of information, or to elicit information."*
>
> (Fein & Clarke-Stewart, 1973)

This is a description of some of the achievements that are involved in language learning: the mastery of the structure or code of language, the acquisition of knowledge relevant to the many functions of language and the acquisition of social skills and interests that promote the use of language in appropriate and varied ways. It is, however, important to ask how far all children achieve these skills. For example, we might question that all children master nearly the entire complex and abstract structure of language by age four and that they all use language efficiently for a variety of functions. In particular, we should ask what factors influence the individual differences in language skill that we can identify in different children. The answers to these questions are very important if we are to talk about a goal of optimum language development for all children. We need to know what environmental variables are involved and the particular aspects of language they affect. A major part of this paper considers the results of research relevant to this point. On the basis of this information we can then begin to identify some of the characteristics of an optimum language learning environment.

Before considering the research in detail, it is helpful to suggest a model of language learning as a framework for future discussion (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

A model of language learning (from Nelson, 1973)

A	B	C	D
child's 'structure': cognitive linguistic, communicative	child's processing strategies	adult's selection strategies	structure of environment (adult's language knowledge)

A model such as that proposed by Nelson (1973) distinguishes between structure and process in language learning. Structure (A) refers to the mental competencies brought by the child to the language learning task. It includes strictly linguistic knowledge such as lexical items and grammatical rules, as well as 'cognitive' knowledge which is knowledge of the meanings the language code expresses and 'communicative' knowledge which is that necessary for transmitting a message in a form in which the listener, as opposed to the speaker, can understand. Structure is in a continual state of change as language matures. Process (B) refers to the dynamic, ongoing use of language for communicating in a social situation. Thus, each individual has his/her own structure (continually changing in the case of a child) and strategies for using language in conversation. So, in an adult-child dyad, the adult, too, has a set of structures representing his/her knowledge of language (D) and a set of processes or strategies for communicating with the child (C). The communicating strategies involve modifying language in ways that are appropriate to the perceived limitations of the child. Thus, through the interaction of two sets of processes, the language structure or knowledge of the child gradually becomes modified until it approximates that of the adult and we judge that language has been learned.

The model suggests certain ways in which the environment could influence language learning and the research relevant to each will be considered. Firstly, we can expect that the mental competencies brought by the child to language learning reflect aspects of prior social experiences. Thus, the whole area of differences attributable to preverbal development needs to be considered. Secondly, we need to look at research that has investigated the information from which children learn language - the language they hear around them reflected in the strategies used by adults for communicating with young children. Thirdly, we need to be aware that language can be used for many functions and that the child's eventual skill in using language in a variety of ways will depend upon his early experience of language as a multi-purpose tool.

1. Research relating to preverbal development:

There is a growing body of evidence to support the idea that development in general proceeds through highly sensitive interactions between caretaker and child. Newson (1974) says, for example:

> *"... the human infant is biologically preprogrammed to emit 'signals', and ... these signals are of such a kind that his mother will inevitably pay attention to them. She is equally bound to endow them with social significance."*

Newson further argues that an infant's behaviour is 'prepunctuated' in that it does not flow as an undifferentiated whole, but is observable as occurring in discrete temporal 'chunks'. These conclusions have been based on observations from slowed-down cine recordings of human infants in 'communication' with their mothers. Newson is convinced that infant behaviour always consists of chains of brief but distinct 'episodes', taking the form of potential gestures, highly organised as sequences of co-ordinated actions.

This view of development hypothesises the innate existence of the necessary elements of communication: the ability of a new-born baby to emit discrete, patterned behaviours that can be interpreted as meaningful by an adult. Communication would presumably never start to develop without the existence of such a system. However, it is unclear from this work how far subsequent development is also preprogrammed. Newson seems to suggest that, because baby and mother are predisposed to interact in certain ways, the progress of development is also predetermined. But his contention that a mother will inevitably pay attention to the infant's signals and endow them with social significance is by no means proven. Firstly, studies in this area have used very select mother-child samples and it is quite possible that mothers (or, more generally, caretakers) differ in their sensitivity in this regard. We may be referring to a difference in sensitivity of this kind when we intuitively speak of 'good' and 'bad' mothering techniques. Secondly, the necessary longitudinal studies have not been completed. Different types of maternal responsiveness may result in differences in later development.

Some research available on older child-mother pairs suggests that this is in fact the case. For example: Clarke-Stewart (1973) studying babies aged between nine and eighteen months, found that measures of infant competence (cognitive, linguistic and social) are all related to one complex maternal factor, which includes measures of social stimulation and contingent responsiveness. Nelson (1973) found that, for slightly older children of between 12 and 24 months, rate of progress in language development is predictable on the basis of a generally accepting maternal feedback dimension. Positive feedback, or reinforcement, may be particularly necessary for facilitating language use at this age. Wulbert et al (1975) have also cited evidence to show that the mother-child relationship, in terms of sensitivity and contingent responsiveness, is a good predictor of language skill. They noted that language-delayed children differ significantly from normals in factors relating to the mother-child relationship such as emotional and verbal responsiveness of the mother, avoidance of punishment and maternal involvement with the child.

We can summarise these findings by suggesting that contingent feedback by the mother, a positive relationship and active social interaction are important environmental factors in child language development. These results imply that the notion of an optimum language learning environment starts at birth.

We cannot meaningfully investigate the development of spoken language without being aware of the importance of the quality of the groundwork that has already been done.

2. Characteristics of mother-child speech:

One of the arguments often used to support an innatist theory of language development points out that language learning is an extremely complex process and that because children normally acquire language without benefit of specific teaching and in such a short time, the child mind must be a highly organised structure to cope with a seeemingtly impossible task. Certainly, language learning is complex, but the opposing argument contends that it is the language input that is highly structured rather than the child mind and that this makes the language learning task possible.

We cannot directly examine the mind, but we can examine the structure of the language that is directed at a young child. In general, adult-child language seems to be characteristically different from adult-adult language. The language adults use when talking to each other is full of complexities, irregularities and a lack of explicitness. On the other hand, a child's introduction to language "ordinarily comes in the form of a simplified, repetitive and idealised dialect" (Brown and Bellugi, 1965). The speech directed by an adult to a young child tends to eliminate the dysfluencies (Maclay and Osgood, 1967) and interruptions and elliptical sentences (O'Connell, 1972) characteristic of adult-adult speech. Mothers also tend to use slower speech rates, more pauses at sentence boundaries and stucturally simple sentences.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the general complexity of a mother's speech increases with the child's linguistic maturity (Phillips, 1972; Fraser and Roberts, 1975; Snow, 1972; Shatz and Gelman, 1973). For example, mothers vary the complexity and length of their utterances as well as the diversity of their vocabulary in interaction with their children at different ages. The largest differences in speech occur when addressing one-and-a-half and two-and-a-half year old children, an age range in which language is developing particularly rapidly. This type of adult-child speech is referred to as 'tailoring' and can be viewed as an extension of the kind of preverbal sensitivity mentioned earlier.

It is possible to identify two aspects to tailoring (Parmenter 1976). These are termed 'structural' tailoring and 'content' tailoring. The term structural tailoring refers to grammatical modifications in speech whereas content tailoring refers to modifications in topic and content appropriate to the child's perceived cognitive abilities and interests.

We can summarise by noting that adult-child speech is characteristically different from adult-adult speech and that the language children hear, and learn from, is more highly structured, less complex and more relevant to their experiences that we might think. It is not necessary to use an 'innatist' explanation of child language learning as the language input intself seems to be structured in appropriate and efficient ways. What, then, accounts for the observed differences in language skill ?

Although a general level of tailoring seems to be common in all adult speech addressed to young children, there are, nevertheless, important differences, particularly in content sensitivity. White (1971) describes the sort of environment that seems to be particularly conducive to language development as being child-oriented and child-controlled. He states:

> "*(the child) is responded to by his mother with help or shared enthusiasm plus, occasionally, an interesting, naturally related idea. These 10 to 30 second interchanges are usually oriented around the child's interest of the moment rather than toward some need or interest of the mother...*"

Content tailoring, then, involves interest in, and sensitivity to, the meanings the child tries to expresss rather than emphasising the language code as such. Both mother and child usually concentrate on the content of the speech unless communication breaks down. When this happens they do switch to a consideration of the linguistic component of the speech and use various strategies to try to re-establish communication. This process is controlled by the listener, and strategies used include requests for repetition or reformulation, requests for identification of specific words or structures and checks that the interpretation is a correct one (Parmenter, 1976). This type of tailoring can vary in terms of, for example, the responsiveness of the mother to the child's attempts at communication, her willingness of accept poorly formed or articulated utterances and how far she perseveres in tying to re-establish communication once it has broken down.

The model of language learning proposed by Nelson proposed that language development is a process of gradual modification of the child's language system until it approximates that of the mature speakers in the environment. It was suggested that this occurs through the interaction of the child's processing strategies and the adult's selection strategies and the mismatches between the two stimulate change in the child's language system.

The evidence reviewed so far suggests that the development of spoken language builds upon and is dependent upon, the cognitive, communicative and verbal competences brought to the language learning task. The process and progress of language development also depends upon the strategies of interaction that have developed between adult and child. It seems that there is tolerance for wide variation in structural input from the adult (given the basis of structural tailoring) but that differences in content tailoring are more crucial to the quality of language development. Since children are unique in the range of experiences they have and in the specific ways they interpret events, there is no 'recipe' for the form the adult modifications should take. Moreover, a continually changing set of competences on the part of the child make individualised content tailoring a necessity. We can summarise by suggesting that general sensitivity to the meanings the child expresses and interest in these communications are more important in promoting language development than a concentration on the form the utterances take.

3. Functions of Language:

At the beginning of this paper we noted that language can be used for a variety of functions: to express feelings, to control the behaviour of self and others, to initiate and maintain social contacts, to convey and receive an organised body of information or to elicit information. How far the child is skillful in using language in a variety of ways depends upon his early experience of language as being important and valued in many different situations. There is evidence that shows that children's experiences of language as performing a range of functions may differ considerably.

Wootten (1974), for example, has investigated social class differences in language use in Great Britain. He finds that working class children are far less likely than middle class children to speak with their parents in certain contexts such as play and argues that the basic difference between social classes in language use may arise because:

> *"the middle class parent participates in this process, (language and cognitive development) much more extensively (e.g. through the use of fantasy and dialogue extension) whereas the working class child is left more in charge of his own construction of reality."* (p.293)

He also proposes a more general difference typical of working class and middle class families when he suggests that the working class operates on the assumption that a child's natural talents will tend to emerge, irrespective of the social world around him, whereas the middle class operates on the assumption that a child remains open to modification and guidance along a broad range of intellectual and social parameters.

Regardless of any social class difference in this respect, the notion of a parental 'philosophy' of child development is an important one. It implies that parenting can vary over a whole range of factors as a result of different beliefs regarding the caretaker's ability to influence the development of the child.

Similar results and conclusions have been produced by a number of studies. Jones (1972), for example, has shown that measures of verbal ability are correlated with an 'interaction' index, a measure representing the extent to which verbalisation is encouraged in the home. Henderson (1972) has also reported that mothers differ in the extent to which they take up the child's attempts at verbal interaction. A number of naturalistic studies (Kagan and Wimberger, 1969; Zunich, 1961; Pavenstedt, 1965) have found that working class mothers contact and actively interact less with their children than middle class mothers and similar results have been obtained from structured play situations (Zegliob and Forehand, 1975).

Apart from differences in the extent of mother-child interaction it is also possible to identify different styles of interaction. One mother may be reflective, taking her cues from the child and encouraging an imaginative, creative use of language. Another may be more controlling, concentrating on the informational aspect of language use, trying to impose meaning of the child's experiences. Since language can be, and is, used for both these purposes it is not appropriate to say that one style is necessarily better than the other. If children are to use language for a variety of functions then they need experience in using it in a variety of ways. Our responsibility to children learning language should include an awareness of the value of all of these.

This review of research has described how children's language development is open to modification by the environment over a range of factors. Most important seems to be the variation associated with the mothering role. The responsiveness, sensitivity and child-orientation of the caretaker affect the child's general development and ultimately his/her language development.

Children in different forms of care:

An increasing number of children are cared for outside the home as members of a group of children, by someone who may not have been acquainted with the child for any length of time. It is important to ask whether this sort of care provides a characteristically different language learning environment from that identified so far. The answer to this question is necessarily tentative because very little research has been done in the area. However, it is possible to review some research that has investigated the general characteristics of child-child speech and we can look at a few studies that have investigated how non-mothers talk to young children. There is also some general data available relating to the amount and kind of interaction children experience in the day-care setting.

A number of studies have shown that the older child is capable of modifying his/her speech to the needs of a younger child in a way that can be compared with adult structural tailoring. For example, Berko Gleason (1973), Shatz and Gelman (1973) and Yurchak (1969) all note that children as young as three and four modify their speech in this way when talking to even younger children. Older children also exhibit the more general ability to take into account social needs and adapt their speech accordingly (Garvey and Hogan, 1973; Maratsos, 1973; Mueller, 1972). Thus, structural tailoring seems to be a universal characteristic of speech directed at a very young child (under the age of three approximately) by both adults and older children.

A few studies have investigated the speech of adult caretakers in various institutions such as kindergartens, day-care centres and residential nurseries. These indicate that, firstly, adult caretakers adapt the structure of their speech to the needs of the child in similar ways to those observed in mother-child dyads. Granowsky and Krossner (1970) have shown that kindergarten teachers use shorter, more simple sentences and a relatively restricted vocabulary when interacting with the five to six year olds in their care. Although these children are older than those considered so far, the comparability with mother-child interaction suggests that similar structural tailoring will exist. The results of a study of two year olds in day-care (Parmenter, 1976) also indicate that the adult caretakers modify the structure of their speech appropriately. More importantly, the staff vary the complexity of their speech according to the individual levels of language development of children in the same age range. Thus, structural tailoring is sensitive to language level rather than to age level.

Secondly, the research indicates that the 'philosophy' of the institution and/or of a particular staff member has a general effect on the quality and quantity of the staff output. Tizard (1974) reports that staff talk more in centres which have an avowed 'educational' aim as opposed to those centres staffed by non-teachers with more of a 'minding' aim. The staff in the 'educational' centres also give the children more information, read to them more often and spend more time interacting with them rather than merely supervising them. Thomas (1973) has noted similar differences in nursery schools and Connelly and Smith (cited in Tizard, 1974) have produced comparable results by experimentally altering the amount of contact between staff and children. It seems that, in residential care, 'staff autonomy' is a good predictor of the amount of and variation in verbal exchanges with children (Tizard et al, 1972). Low autonomy results from strict timetabling, a predictable routine and specific role definition. Staff operating within this system display 'supervisory' characteristics, the children are encouraged to be passive and there are fewer adult-child exchanges than within a more autonomous framework.

Thirdly, the sex of the child may affect staff output. Cherry (1975) reports that, for children aged between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years, teachers verbally interact more, verbally initiate more and use more attentional marked utterances in speech with boys than with girls. She suggests that this finding can be explained in terms of the conflict between sex role expectations for boys and the traditional school demands. Specifically, she notes that the sex role expectations for boys are that they be achieving, independent and aggressive, a contrast with their expected student role as quiet, conforming and compliant. Etaugh et al (1975) find that there are sex differences in two year old children in play patterns, in that girls are more likely to paint, help the teacher and read books or listen to stories, while boys prefer to hammer and play with transport toys. It can be seen that the girls play more in situations in which adult-child verbal interactions are likely and that the boys prefer self or peer oriented behaviour. This is not in conflict with Cherry's findings as the speech directed at boys in her study was essentially controlling and attention getting.

Fourthly, the way in which children are organised into groups affects the distribution of the staff output between the group members. Tizard et al (1972) note that, in residential care, the staff talk more to the older pre-school children. Schachter et al (1974) also find that children under three talk mainly to adults. Therefore, if there is less adult-child speech occurring for the under-threes and children in this age group address proportionately more of their speech to adults, we must conclude that these children interact less overall in a mixed age set up. It has been shown that, in day-care, the amount of interaction between staff and two-and-a-half year olds also varies as a function of group organisation. These children experience less adult contact if they are members of a mixed age group (two to five years) than if they are with peers. This seems to be a result of 'competition' for adult attention. The younger children are likely to be less successful in attracting attention if they 'compete' with older, more competent children.

Finally, although there is little evidence that relates to content tailoring in various institutions, it can be shown that language tends to be more restricted in the range of functions for which it is used in a day-care setting (Parmenter, 1976). In a comparison with the home, language is used more often to control behaviour at the expense of other alternative uses such as the exchange of information. Moreover, there seems to be far more evidence of attention to 'good' language, such as naming ability and correct pronunciation in some day-care centres than that usually evident in the home.

We can summarise these points by noting that the basic conditions for language learning are present in the care provided outside the home. The language directed at a young child is highly structured and relatively simple regardless of whether the speaker is the child's mother, another adult caretaker or even an older child. However, group care may easily result in an adult-oriented and controlled language environment rather than a child-oriented and controlled one.

In conclusion, we can identify certain features of what might be called an optimum language learning environment. This is one in which the child receives sensitive, response contingent care from birth, allowing a sound base of cognitive, communicative and verbal competences to be developed. When spoken language begins to emerge the child needs frequent interaction with mature speakers who not only tailor their language structurally, but who are responsive to the meanings that language is used to convey. The evidence supports the idea that the form of language - vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation - will develop adequately over a wide range of input. However, sensitive content tailoring is particularly important if the child is to value language as a means of expression and use it in varied ways. There seems to be no reason why this type of environment cannot be provided for children cared for in a range of situations so long as caretakers are made aware of the factors involved. We need to guard against the tendency to equate the provision of a good language learning environment with the need to teach language. A focus on language rather than meaning may be detrimental to language development particularly over the age range we have considered.

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THE REALITIES OF THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Questions proposed as guidelines for Group and Commission discussions:

1. During the Seminar it has been affirmed that our laws imply that the rights of the child are coincidental with those of the parent/custodian. Another speaker believed it helpful to see childrens' rights not as a special case or category but as belonging to universal human rights. Another view was that man's major problems affected children more severely than other groups; moreover, attention was drawn to the competition that can exist between the interests of society or parents and the interests of children.

   To what extent is the view justified that "we do not need special rights for children, as their rights are the same as those of all human kind?"

2. Harm has been caused to children through adverse physical environments and through adverse psycho-social conditions. Major presentations at the seminar have depicted these influences as grave and deep-rooted. Nevertheless, examples have been cited of improvements over the last two hundred years, and more dramatic improvement, as in China, over recent years. It seems that in these cases the child has benefited from broadly based programs of action designed to raise the level of living of a whole community.

   What implications do these considerations hold for the curative/preventive activities OMEP might undertake in less-developed countries or in disadvantaged sectors of developed countries?

3. During the seminar the case has been argued for national planning of an integrated child and family centred service to improve the condition of the family and consequently the child. It has been claimed that planning should be based on a realistic model of the modern family and of family life in the present age. Preparation for and support of the parenting role must be included in planning.

   It has been urged that implementation of these plans will be most effective when it is at the local level, with local communities and networks given the resources to tackle their own problems rather than have "solutions" imposed on them.

   Are these ideas realistic?

   What resources should be made available to local communities?

   How can professional services be closely associated in a helping role rather than pursue separate and elitist practices?

   How can the most effective kind and level of service from resource/professional people be assured for local communities?

   Are the best interests of the child likely to be served through programs implemented within community groups?

4. Some omissions from the Declaration of the Rights of the Child have been pointed out. A number of areas have been identified where children's rights are not respected. The very great difficulty of improving the situation of the child born disadvantaged has been emphasised.

   Can OMEP be effective at both the curative and the fundamental preventive levels?

   Is real improvement rother than mere palliatives possible when the community to which the child belongs is below a certain level of socio-economic development?

5. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child has been described as "a largely meaningless document", and as "an impotent piece of rhetoric"; moveover, the phrase "children's rights" has been dismissed as a "slogan in search of a definition".

   Again, it has been asserted that there is a tendency to use the "welfare and best interests of the child" as a vessel into which adult perceptions and prejudices are poured.

   What value can there be in a statement as universal in its intended scope as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child?

   How to reconcile the Declaration with the necessity of seeing each child in his particular social and cultural setting? of viewing rights and responsibilities in the context of changing realities and values?

   How can the Declaration be used as a basis for vigorous and effective action?

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE SEMINAR

- Evangeline Ward

Friends of children and families at home and abroad, let me welcome you today to this very important final plenary session of the OMEP Seminar and extend warm greetings from America to all our neighbours around this rather small universe when we focus on our concern with human dignity. It is with deep gratitude that I take this opportunity to think the Australian Preschool Association and the Australian National Committee of OMEP - for all of us from the United States National Committee -- not only for your gracious hospitality which has also been generous - but for the provocative planning to which we who have come these days can attest. To Mrs. Pullin and her associates, we owe a tremendous debt of thanks.

We began our seminar with the challenges posed by Dr. Candide Pineault and Mrs. Rosemary Milne on Thursday morning. I was singularly touched when Mrs. Milne spoke about the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, since in my preparations to serve in this role, I had elected to bring along this document for its direct relationship to our theme here in Australia. I cite this merely to have you realize how small world distances are when the rights of people are at stake - or are potentially being threatened.

Indeed our children have no rights that cannot be guaranteed by the adults who care for and about them. Adults whose rights are denied are literally powerless to assure them for children: parents and professionals alike. Concurrently, adults who do not accept the responsibility for insuring their own rights are hardly in position to accept the responsibility for insuring the rights of others: adults or children's.

This message is clearly that contained in Article I. of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Man:

> "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood."

I believe that it is no accident that this is Article #I. It is a deliberate priority for all that follows (including the Declaration of the Rights of the Child). It is a statement of commitment which prefaces the intent of the document, which was debated at great length in the United Nations and adopted more than ten years before the declaration on children: December 10, 1948. You may not know that it was the Netherlands countries that insisted on the inclusion in the final text of specific references to co-ordination of efforts.

> "...the General Assembly would call upon parents, individuals, voluntary organizations, local authorities and national governments to recognize these rights and strive for their observance by legislative and other measures progressively taken in accordance with these principles."

In the United States, from the 1930 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, a children's Charter emerged with a major slogan:

> For Every Child These Rights, Regardless of Race or Color or Situation, Wherever He may Live Under the Protection of the American Flag.

Article 19 of that Charter reads thusly:

> "To make everywhere available these minimum protections of the health and welfare of children, there should be a district, county or community organization for health, education and welare with full-time officials, co-ordinating with a state-wide program which will be responsive to a nation-wide service of general information, statistics and scientific research."

Forty-eight years ago, this Charter notes that EVERY child is to be afforded these rights - not just children AT RISK.

At the 1970 White House Conference on Children, Forum 22 categorized the rights of children into the following six groups:

1. The right to grow in a society which respects the dignity of life and is free of poverty, discrimination, and other forms of degradation.
2. The right to be born and be healthy and wanted through childhood.
3. The right to grow up nurtured by affectionate parents.
4. The right to be a child during childhood, to have meaningful choices in the process of maturation and development and to have a meaningful voice in the community.
5. The right to be educated to the limits of one's capability through processes designed to elicit one's full potential.
6. The right to have societal mechanisms to enforce the foregoing rights.

Despite the fact that forty years intervened between these two conferences, a comparison would reveal essentially little difference. It is clear that the United States of America is the most internationally-peopled country in the world. I regret to inform you that we have yet an amazing distance to go to implement these well-formulated "statements of intent". In very recent years, we are learning to take obvious pride in each cultural heritage and history that really makes us what we are: hyphenated-Americans, i.e., European-Americans, Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, etc.

I have deliberately taken this opportunity to venture into this bit of the history of my country's attempts to address the rights of its children as a means of orientation to this final session of the OMEP Seminar. We, who have had the obvious advantages of travelling to this lovely continent and city to interchange ideas and discourse around our deep concerns for children, are inclined to value our experiences as individuals and professionals. This is as it should be. Let me share with you the point of view of one of America's most powerful spokespersons and activists, the "Children's Lawyer", Mrs. Marion Wright Edelman. At the 1977 National Association for the Education of Young Children and the 1978 Association for Childhood Education conferences, she reminded the audiences that forums, dialogues and seminars are just for that: forums, diaglogues and seminars! They are not actions on behalf of children. They are arenas for planning for action. Alas! Too often that is where it ends.

What has been for you and me here in Melbourne is about to be climaxed in the presentation of recommendations to follow by Dr. Desmond Connelly. If you and I plan to act on behalf of the world's children, we will take seriously this portion of our seminar which indeed will require both individual and collective action as home as well as within the plans of OMEP and programs during and after the International Year of the Child celebration.

It is a distinct privilege for me to present to you, at this time, another significant planner and activist who has supported in many ways the success of this seminar.

We have been privileged to share his "home away from home" with "all the rights pertaining thereto" here at the Institute of Early Childhood Development. I may be presuming too much when I refer to the Institute as his "home away from home" - but I rather suspect he spends a great deal of his time maintaining the quality that is evident in his staff members, many of whom you have already met and heard from in one capacity or another during your stay here.

In addition to the evidences of his administrative acumen which you have already witnessed, this gentleman is a scholar, holding degrees from universities here and abroad; he holds distinguished awards and fellowships to attest to this.

He has served as a primary teacher, a secondary teacher, a principal, and administrator of systems of schools, a lecturer in graduate schools and as a Dean of Teacher Education.

He has served and continues to serve in responsible positions with professional organizations and in consultative capacities both here in Australia and in other countries.

He is a prolific publisher and he and his wife were in attendance at the OMEP World Assembly in Poland last summer. In January of this year, he lectured at the University of Hong Kong on: Pre-Primary Education and Development.

It is my pleasure to present to you - Dr. Desmond Connelly, Principal of the Institute of Early Childhood Development, who will bring to you recommendations from the discussion groups and commissions for your consideration and deliberation.

REPORT ON THE SEMINAR

- Desmond Connelly

Early in the Seminar it was emphasised that the Declaration of the Rights of the Child is a useful complement to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in that it focuses attention on matters essential to the welfare and happiness of mankind. Nevertheless, there was a strong warning against complacency because, it was pointed out, while the happy cared for child has continued to improve his condition even further, the child who happens to be born disadvantaged in any of a great variety of ways remains inevitably fated to neglect and inferiority. From her range of first hand experience extending over many parts of the globe the World President herself bore testimony to the melancholy fact that misery and suffering continue to plague mankind in our day as they have in the past.

From the facts presented during the Seminar it is clear that the rights set out in the Declaration are simply not available to most children in the world; they are not respected in very many countries; a great number of countries lack the basic legislative and institutional infrastructures needed to maintain social services for vulnerable groups. There have been reminders that too often the city is favoured over the rural areas and this not only in the less developed countries. Countries which would claim to be advanced still inflict on their children suffering and disability. This comes about through such factors as family breakdown, the lack of skilled professional support services, and even the failure of parents and the general community to become sensitive to the need for social improvement, and to commit themselves actively to seeking it. It has been pointed out that while physical disabilities and deprivation are obvious, dramatic and moving, psycho-social disabilities and deprivations, less evident and perhaps less dramatic, can be just as traumatic and should move us to action as forcibly as do the physical.

The record then is not good, even in those matters to which the Declaration of the Rights of the Child makes reference. There has been a disquieting insistence that the Declaration contains omissions which are glaring in the light of modern conditions of life. Furthermore it has been emphasised that at least some of the principles are expressed in such a way as to offer little guidance for their pragmatic implementation in the modern context.

In a thought provoking reaction to the keynote speaker Rosemary Milne urged consideration as to whether the failures so sadly emphasised by Dr. Devine and Dr. Pineault might not have their origin in the very desire to do more for children by promulgating on their behalf a separate Declaration of Rights. In her view there could be much more value in a stronger affirmation of universal human rights, of the principle of universal justice, of recognition that the child is not the only vulnerable element in our communities. She stresssed that the rights of which we speak belong to all men, that the child has no special entitlement to first consideration with regard to those rights, but that others may voluntarily decide to yield primacy to the child in certain respects. Clearly Rosemary

Milne saw in this kind of orientation and emphasis a means of improving the lot of all men, and therefore, inevitably that of the child. A later speaker argued that apart from the most rudimentary of rights it is a complex task to establish boundaries between child rights and the competing rights of adults. Despite the provocative contributions of Rosemary Milne and others it could be that the failures in improving the general situation of children do not lie in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child nor in a concentration on it at the expense of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Rather it seems likely that the critical fault has been in the failure to make these Declarations operational through determined action to translate their general principles into practical plans suited to particular places, circumstances and children.

In the forum session on Thursday there was emphasis on the improvement of basic social conditions as the essential first step in achieving greater benefits for any particular group. While there was recognition of the key notions that rights are relative and are appropriately determined for a particular community principally in the light of its special economic-social-cultural context, there was also strong agreement that the key to improvement is a healthy family. At the same time there was a warning that what is needed is a modern, realistic concept of family life rather than the idealized unreal image so often portrayed.

There was further insistence on recognizing as not universally valid, the notions of minimal interference with the family and of the preservation at all costs of the traditional family group irrespective of its quality. From the child's point of view it was recognized as essential that he be located in a family setting that is happy and caring. It was strongly affirmed that there must be a careful and realistic assessment of the family situation with appropriate services made accessible to support the family and so foster the development of the child.

One of the speakers saw as society's greatest challenge the task of educating and supporting all its families, a work for which there had to be national planning but local responsibility for action. Such local action was seen as entailing the appropriate involvement of the entire community in projects designed to bring about social improvement, and it was argued that there should be made available to local communities and networks of communities the powers, responsibilities and resources necessary for this work. Important among the resources would be professionals who rejecting any elitist conception of their roles worked in association to provide an integrated helping service centred on the child and the family. While there was sensitivity to the fact that the child may be the most vulnerable member of the group, it was seen as essential that the family in general be supported if the best interests of the child were to be furthered. This would require a careful a realistic assessment of the family situation with appropriate services being made accessible to support the family and so foster the development of the child. Support of the family was seen as including preparation of parents for their role as well as support for and sharing in their responsibilities by the community of which they form a part.

There was recognition of the dilemma stemming from two possible views of the child - one seeing him in a family context, and the other viewing him as an individual. There was agreement that to a significant degree the child had to be seen as free, distinct and autonomous and in the real world there had to be recognition that his rights are not necessarily coincident with those of the parent or the care giver. While the only suggested path towards a solution of this dilemma was seen in the giving and accepting of local responsibility for community welfare, a useful guide to action was provided in the insistence that the child should be seen not as a decrete being but as one who will successively become a youth and an adult.

Given all the foregoing considerations participants were challenged by the assertion that the Declaration of the Rights of the Child is close to being a meangingless document, that the rights it lists are largely inoperative, and that its terminology and general mode of expression are out of touch with the tenor of our times being too much of the heart and not sufficiently of the head.

The foregoing considerations are an attempt to bring together related salient considerations from all of the formal presentations made during the seminar. There is, however, an additional thought which re-echoes many of the informal contributions at the seminar. It deals with the belief that it will be a sad day when man comes to believe that he must put aside the dictates of the heart and be ruled by the intellect alone. Even if human history did not warn of the dangers of such a belief, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and hosts of others would surely rise in protest to condemn man for forgetting that he is most true to his own nature when he brings to his actions not only the clarity, vigour and incisiveness of his intellect, but also the tenderness, the generosity, and the understanding of his heart. Many would go further and insist that there is no wrong in formulating a Declaration of the Rights of the Child to complement the universal Declaration of the Rights of Man for to many people the child is the most dramatic, the most moving, the most significant, the richest symbol of mankind in general; in labouring to further the welfare of the child these people believe they are concentrating their energies on what is potentially the most effective means of improving the lot of all mankind.

A number of recommendations are now proposed to seminar participants. These have been drawn up in consultation with the leaders of the Seminar Discussion and Commission Groups and reflect the major ideas which have been raised during the course of the Seminar. It is anticipated that should these recommendations receive the formal endorsement of this Plenary Sessions they will be sent by OMEP to decision-makers throughout the world. In particular, those who subscribe to the principles of OMEP will be urged to use these recommendations as a guide to action this year, in the 1979 Year of the Child, and in the years that lie immediately ahead.

The endorsement of the following recommendations by the Plenary Session is now invited:-

1. ALL PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT DAY OF A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND A COMPLEMENTARY DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD.

   THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD SHOULD BE A STATEMENT OF INTENT FROM WHICH NATIONS SHOULD DRAW UP THEIR OWN BILL OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN WHICH SHOULD BE ENACTED INTO THE LAWS OF THE LAND.

2. THE CHILD SHALL BE INVOLVED IN CHOICES WHICH AFFECT HIS FUTURE AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW UP IN THE CARE AND UNDER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HIS PARENT OR PARENTS OR IN A FAMILY GROUP APPROPRIATE TO THE CULTURAL CONTEXT. AT ALL LEVELS THERE SHOULD BE RECOGNITION OF CHANGING CONCEPTS, MODELS AND STYLE OF THE FAMILY AND FAMILY LIFE CYCLES.

3. THE INTEGRATION OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, WELFARE AND OTHER SERVICES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED SO AS TO PROVIDE RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, RESEARCH, ADVICE, AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND FOR THOSE WORKING WITH THEM.

   TO ACHIEVE THIS INTEGRATION EFFECTIVE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION MUST BE ESTABLISHED AMONG ALL OF THOSE PROVIDING, DEVELOPING AND USING THESE SERVICES.

4. THE EXPRESSED NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE A PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES. POWERS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO ENABLE PEOPLES TO BE ACTIVE IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS. RESOURCES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL SHOULD INCLUDE THOSE NEEDED TO PROVIDE PREPARATION FOR PARENTHOOD AS WELL AS SUPPORT OF APPROPRIATE KINDS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE OR WHO SHARE IN A CHILD-REARING ROLE.

5. THERE SHOULD BE A GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE NATIONAL ROLE OF OMEP AND PARTICULARLY IN THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD. OMEP SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON SPECIFIC LOCAL ACTION INVOLVING THE ASSOCIATION OF A VARIETY OF HELPING SERVICES.

(Each of the recommendations was given formal approval by the participants in the Plenary Session).

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